University of Alberta

Human Oddities, Rain Dogs, and Other Wanderers: Character and Narrative in the Music of Tom Waits

by

Corinne Kessel

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

Tom Waits' music is powered by the depth and strength of his characters and their narrative expression. This thesis identifies the characters that unfold in the course of Tom Waits' musical career, from *Closing Time* to *Mule Variations*, and studies the effects of their pervasiveness in his lyrics, music, instrumentation, voice, persona, and performance style. The idea of the wanderer, who seeks escape from all of his problems and dreams himself into oblivion, serves as the fundamental thematic category guiding the investigation of the dual dynamics of character and narrative structure. The development of Tom Waits' musical style is presented, along with a discussion focusing on his communicative voice and subversive vocal language. This thesis illustrates Tom Waits' own poetics of representation, his practice of portraying ordinary, often overlooked and forgotten characters as extraordinary, and their stories as profound, set against his penetrating musical soundscapes.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Human Oddities, Rain Dogs, and Other Wanderers: Character and Narrative in the Music of Tom Waits submitted by Corinne Kessel in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Human Oddities, Rain Dogs, and Other Wanderers: Character and Narrative in the Music of Tom Waits

Desperate and depraved, lost and forgotten, catastrophically undone, the human detritus that history overlooks and society dismisses is given a voice through the music of Tom Waits. After sketching out in reasonable detail a musical biography of Tom Waits, the thesis engages in uncovering and defining the characters that develop through Waits' musical career from *Closing Time* (1973) to *Mule Variations* (1999), and illustrates their presence in his lyrics, music, instrumentation, and voice. The larger narrative of Waits' musical style is examined, along with a discussion that focuses on his "voice" in both the literal and figurative sense of the word and on the subversiveness that governs his language. Character and narrative are shown to be integral to Tom Waits' songs and their incorporation into all levels of his musical and lyrical development throughout his career is revealed.

My goal is to demonstrate how Tom Waits' music and evocative lyrics chronicle the daily lives and unravel the tangled memories of the lowlifes, misfits, and outcasts of society. The investigation isolates a catalogue of formal characteristics and thematic clusters in his work. It will be shown that his characters are restless wanderers, lonely travellers, desperate strangers, tormented deviants, and fallen angels who contend their battered lives with drinking, prostitution, crime, religion, and the active quest for somewhere better than the place where life now holds them. This investigation is carried out with respect to the dynamics and contradictions of realism itself, and more locally, with respect to the dynamics of the musical text, the imaginary landscapes projected by that text, and the persona portrayed by Tom Waits in performance. Tom Waits is a prolific composer and diverse musician who does not chase after shiny red firetrucks to awesome blazing fires, but instead looks at the fragility and intangibility of dreams found dissipating in the last wisp of smoke from a burnt down cigarette in the weathered hands of a broken soul.

I. A BIO-DISCOGRAPHY

Though he is a successful and highly influential musician, actor, and film composer, Tom Waits has never been a commercial hit or made into an action figure, and his songs that were covered by more radio-friendly artists are perhaps the most familiar. Always an uncompromising individualist, Tom Waits claims to have been born on December 7, 1949 in the backseat of a taxicab just outside of a hospital in Pomona, California. He lived his childhood in Whittier and many different parts of Southern California as his parents moved around and eventually divorced when he was ten. As a result of (or in spite of) his family's early peripatetic existence, Tom Waits developed a passion for travel, a plethora of exotic names for his vocabulary, and an appreciation for American kitsch.

Tom Waits was interested in music from a young age, that is, interested in listening to music, never really considering it a feasible career choice. He taught himself to play the piano at a neighbour's house, learned how to play the guitar, and delighted in the sounds of Bing Crosby, Cole Porter, Howlin' Wolf, Irving Berlin, Ray Charles, George Gershwin, Bob Dylan, Frank Sinatra, and the books and poetry of Jack Kerouac, Charles Bukowski, and Allen Ginsberg. Owing his musical and personal development and detailed vocabulary more to Beat-bohemian influences and the iconoclastic attitudes of earlier heroes like Lord Buckley and Lenny Bruce than the "whole love and flowers bit" of the sixties, the teenage Tom Waits tore "down the tarmac chasing the ghost of Jack Kerouac" and ignored "the psychedelic mayhem of the time" (Humphries 1989, 17).

He dropped out of high school to take on various odd jobs and quickly became what he called "the jack-off of all trades," working in restaurants, pizza places, and night-clubs. In these places, derelict and misfit characters and their stories began to materialize around him. It became his project to represent these images and characters in song, and while performing at a hoot night at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, which was one of the most important club

showcases for new talent, Tom Waits caught the attention of an industry insider, Herb Cohen, who managed such acts as Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention, Captain Beefheart, Lenny Bruce, and Tim Buckley. He signed Tom Waits to his management and helped him sign a record deal with Asylum records (which produced other popular Californian acts like The Eagles and Jackson Brown). Cohen called in Jerry Yester, former The Lovin' Spoonful and Modern Folk Quartet member and producer for several California groups and singers such as Tim Buckley, the Turtles, and The Association, to produce Waits' debut album, *Closing Time*, which was released in 1973 by Asylum. Yester, with his own specific ideas, disciplined Tom Waits' music to conform more closely to the formalized marketing category of "singer-songwriter" which typified Asylum's artist roster, rather than follow Waits' inclinations towards heavier jazz instrumentations and arrangements. Tom Waits toured vigorously in support of *Closing Time*, often unsuccessfully paired by manager Herb Cohen with his other acts, including Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention, whose audiences were largely unreceptive to the beatnik personality adopted by Waits' and the bittersweet songs he performed.

For more appreciative listeners, Tom Waits' rich maudlin poetic lyrics of nighthawks and outsiders, his loungey sentiments, and his distinctive voice quickly earned him a dedicated following and critical praise, though it quickly separated him from the mainstream success of the more accessible Southern California singer-songwriter movement and the following trends of disco and then punk. Soon the stories and myths began to grow about the finger-snapping, chain-smoking, and booze-soaked beat poet who stayed in skid row hotels and hitch-hiked from gig to gig. Early in his career, he set up residency in the notorious Tropicana Motel on Santa Monica Boulevard, notorious for the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll lifestyles of the touring bands and inhabitants it housed such as Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, and Rickie Lee Jones. Comfortable with motel life, Tom Waits kept his piano in his kitchen,

and dove headlong into the excesses of a "time-warped Beat" (Humphries 1989, 29). His performance persona was truly that of a drunken bohemian singer-songwriter, a consummate bar entertainer, sitting behind the dusty piano or cracked guitar at the back of the bar telling stories about real people with real lives and real struggles.

The Heart of Saturday Night, which was Waits' first encounter with producer Bones Howe, hinted at the highly stylised jazz arrangements and the lyrics that were a skewed balance between pathos and wit, which would come to be associated with Tom Waits' inimitable style. The live album, *Nighthawks at the Diner*, saw the further development of Tom Waits' drunken bohemian after-hours persona that was an amalgamation of beatnik, vaudevillian, and crooner qualities. Throughout the seventies, Tom Waits was often on the road, honing his gutter-trawling image, which often preceded him, and cultivating his storytelling. *Nighthawks at the Diner* demonstrates Tom Waits' brilliant rapport with intimate audiences and his fluidity at shifting in and out of different compelling characters. Musically, Tom Waits' foundation at this time was that of a piano and jazz combo with occasional lush orchestral arrangements. *Small Change* and *Foreign Affairs* furthered his jazz and beat oriented and influenced expression while his image continued to be " 'cultivated, derived from the way I am,' he says. 'I just try to steer a course between the pomp and the piss' " (Waits 1977, 51). *Small Change* also found Tom Waits re-examining his writing style. In his previous albums such as *Nighthawks at the Diner* and *The Heart of Saturday Night*, Waits allowed himself the self-indulgence of intricate details, but with *Small Change*, he began to really develop his stories and the action within them instead of just taking lavish snapshots. *Blue Valentine* and *Heartattack and Vine* stylistically began to head towards a more guitar oriented rock sound. *Heartattack and Vine*, anchored by the late New Orleans drummer, "Big John" Thomassie, is characterized by its venture into heavily electric blues sounds and rhythms, which balanced the lush orchestral arrangements still present on

some songs. Following the release of the compilation *Bounced Checks*, Tom Waits began to expand and experiment musically, and with the direction of his career.

The eighties found Tom Waits venturing into the realm of film, both as an actor and as a soundtrack composer, working on such projects as Francis Ford Coppola's *One from the Heart* and Jim Jarmusch's *Down By Law*. For Tom Waits, scoring the multi-million dollar film, *One from the Heart*, was a very different and rewarding experience. With a piano in an office and a rigid schedule, Tom Waits worked in the style of the old Brill Building songwriters, and learned how to discipline himself and his composing. His beguiling and Oscar-nominated song score is deftly woven into the narrative, visuals, and characters of this lounge operetta, functioning as a musical commentary for the action taking place on the screen. In response to a question about his increasing involvement in film and theatre, Tom Waits replied, "[i]t's thrilling to see the insanity of all these people brought together like this life-support system to create something that's really made out of smoke. The same thing draws me to making records – you fashion these things and ideas into your own monster. It's making dreams. I like that" (Oney 1988, 129). Theatre and film were natural developments for Tom Waits who was learning to further utilize an actor's skill to give depth and complexity to the dysfunctional and emotionally bruised characters of his songs.

Tom Waits' jazz and blues inflected ballads, characteristic of his early years, qualified him as an acceptable artist for the prosaic California folk sound of the Asylum label however, his new material was a striking departure from his previous work and provoked a move from Asylum to Island Records. Tom Waits also began to produce his own albums with his new wife and co-writer, Kathleen Brennan, whom he met while working on Francis Ford Coppola's film, *One From the Heart*, and stepped into more adventurous soundscapes and new means of expression. His earlier characters were all undeniably unique and came from diverse backgrounds, but when captured and represented in his music, they all seemed

similar. To remedy this, Tom Waits began working with new textures and layers, moving away from the secure sounds of the piano or jazz combo and playing with found and ethnic instruments, different recording techniques, more varied and unimaginable characters, and a wider vocal range. Tom Waits' earlier years were imbued with music and lyrics that were steeped in the cigarette and booze reality of his life, and as his life was changing, his music underwent a transition which brought it much closer to his imagination. He began to understand that it was possible and effective to separate himself personally from whom he was as a writer and composer. This helped to power Tom Waits' transformation in musical direction and character placement.

With the move to Island Records, Tom Waits seemed to get leaner and edgier as he became less dependent upon finding romance and humour in a lonely whiskey bottle and revelled in a world and beauty that sounded angular and dangerous. Tom Waits' intensive collaboration with Kathleen significantly refocused the direction in which his music was headed as;

> She has a fearless imagination. She writes lyrics that are like dreams. There's no one I trust more with music, or life. And she's got great rhythm, and finds melodies that are so intriguing and strange. Most of the significant changes I went through musically and as a person began when we met. She's the person by which I measure all others. She's who you want with you in a foxhole. She doesn't like the limelight, but she is an incandescent presence on everything we work on together. (Waits 1999b)

Tom Waits credits Kathleen Brennan with helping him to integrate far-ranging musical influences like Lead Belly, Captain Beefheart, Skip James, and Schoenberg and to reconcile this diversity in his music. Kathleen encouraged Waits to take more risks in his composing and lyrics, and to challenge his insecurities and vulnerabilities as a musician, writer, and performer.

For his three ambitious albums, *Swordfishtrombones*, *Rain Dogs*, and *Frank's Wild Years* (a play co-written with Kathleen Brennan), the norm of Tom Waits' musical

foundations drastically changed from romantic piano ballads and jazz configurations into junkyard orchestrations with instruments such as metal aunglongs, glass harmonicas, mellotrons, optigons, banjos, accordions, pump organs, chairs, marimbas, bagpipes, bullhorns, and kitchen sinks. Predictably, Tom Waits developed a fascination for the American composer Harry Partch, a "hobo" who deconstructed and reinvented music, creating instruments from virtually anything he came in contact with. Now armed with a new melange of instrumentation and intensified percussion, Tom Waits' visionary albums also encompassed a new mix of blues, the simplicity of nursery rhymes, free-form jazz, tango, and other styles, giving the albums a sense of creative absurdity and juxtaposition. Similarly, his production values greatly changed during this time in his career. As specific and particular as Tom Waits became in attaining the sounds and chameleon vocals he required for his songs, rather than falling in with the high tech digital gloss of the eighties, Waits became equally concerned with developing his "lo-fi" idiosyncratic production style. Tom Waits became so enraptured with the individuality of sounds and the textures of music, that if he wanted to capture the sound of an anvil, he would drag the brake drum from his car into the studio and figure out a way to mike it rather than work with sampled sounds.

The live album and concert film *Big Time* released in 1988 coalesced items from the Island trilogy and was Tom Waits' last album with Island Records until the film score to Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth* was released in 1992. At this time, *The Early Years*, which was originally recorded in 1971, prior to his debut *Closing Time*, was released by Herb Cohen's and Frank Zappa's Bizarre/Straight labels. *The Early Years* and *The Early Years Volume 2* gave a fascinating glimpse of Tom Waits at an amorphous, much less stylised stage in his musical career. Here Tom Waits' voice sounds like it is overflowing with world-wearied resignation and subterranean sentimentality rather than the understated contemporary folk-rock mould that producer Jerry Yester tried to fit around Tom Waits.

Throughout the nineties Tom Waits continued to build his fan base, expand his film and theatre career, and delve into greater experimentation, boho artiness, and genre-mixing with his music. *Bone Machine*, containing eight tracks co-written with Kathleen Brennan, embodied these innovations in a haunting and skeletal musical construction. This album was another edge-pusher for Waits' sonic and poetic boundaries and concerned itself with the omnipresence of life, death, and destruction. Filled with the sounds of clattering sticks and foreboding boot-stomping, and dark vignettes gathered from Biblical allegories and newspaper clippings, the corrosive *Bone Machine* was his first album to win a Grammy for "Best Alternative Album." Tom Waits' next album, *The Black Rider*, released in 1993, is the score to a black comic operetta created in collaboration with the director Robert Wilson and Beat icon William S. Burroughs, and was first performed by the Thalia Theater Company in Hamburg in 1990. Through the cacophonic score that accompanied this theatrical work and the following Robert Wilson operatic production, *Alice*, Tom Waits explored thematic developments within the style of German expressionism.

In 1998, to end his fifteen year relationship with Island Records, Tom Waits released a collection of 23 songs spanning his seven Island albums from *Swordfishtrombones* to *The Black Rider* entitled *Beautiful Maladies: The Island Years*. With a second label change to the indie operated punk label Epitaph, Tom Waits released *Mule Variations* in 1999 for which he received a Grammy for Best Contemporary Folk Album. Receiving greater support and freedom with Epitaph, Tom Waits fervently embraced the uses of contradictory styles from avant garde apocalyptic clanks to carnival stomps to tender nursery rhyme melodies. Co-produced and co-written with Kathleen Brennan, *Mule Variations* also reunited Tom Waits with his long-time sidemen like horn player Ralph Carney, guitarists Marc Ribot and Joe Gore, drummer Stephen Hodges, and bassist Greg Cohen, as well as introducing new collaborators such as Beck guitarist Smokey Hormel and Primus bassist/singer Les Claypool.

Using less of the theatricality and bucolic images that occupied his last few works like *The Black Rider*, *Alice*, *Bone Machine*, and *Frank's Wild Years*, the long-awaited *Mule Variations* has Tom Waits delving comfortably into dusty tales of rural domestic bliss and charm, rather than concentrating on tales of woe and seedy urban night life.

Musically, in the nineties Tom Waits has expanded all realms of his compositional styles, from the dark, blues inflected ballads and storytelling, to the disjunct, subversive, surreal, and angular elements and bang on anything approach to instrumentation which has surfaced in his later years. The characters and their stories have continued to be bizarre and stretch the imagination, still communicated by his trademark gravel growl. Tom Waits is no longer merely a singer or an entertainer, but has become somewhat of a mysterious cult icon who occupies a shadowy personalized space in popular music and remains largely absent from commercial radio, his live vaudevillian performances always a rare treasure.

II. MUSIC, INSTRUMENTATION, AND VOICE

The semiotics found in genre styles and instrumentation choices are important aspects of Tom Waits' compositional process. Waits uses instrumentation, arrangements, and genre styles to define his characters and to narrate his strange and unusual tales, whether at a barroom piano telling a sad love song or screaming through a bull horn accompanied by the crow of a rooster. Tom Waits' music has always brought humanity to his visionary chronicles of derelict America whether in the form of a crazed tango or swampy blues. In addition to portrayals of emotional states such as romance, bliss, fear, pathos, humour, and anxiety, music has been imbued over time with cultural and even geographical associations, associations Tom Waits clearly chooses to both absorb or ignore. For composers and listeners, particular properties and idioms of melody, harmony, rhythm, and instrumentation form a veritable language indicative of Africa, India, Japan, Scottish highlands, ghettos, the countryside, battlefields, and so forth. Tom Waits often explores the semiotics of genre, instrumentation, and style which categorize music, for example, using wheezy organs, accordions, and toy pianos to generate carnival sounds or banjos to give a rural feel. However, he manipulates these properties and looks beyond them, to a more sublime place, where sounds unfold in his music to give a feel of a gutter in New York, a strip club in Los Angeles, a train station in Australia, or a tattoo parlour in Singapore, as he works to bring forth the stories and emotions stirring around in these places.

Music works to give people different identities and social groups which they can identify or identify with. Though Tom Waits does not necessarily use Taiko drums and pan flutes to indicate Asia, he creates a mood that appropriately sets the story that he wants told, and his music takes on another level of narrative structure in which the listeners must situate themselves. Tom Waits' music offers the possibility of an alternative experience within the

social forces that govern everybody's daily life by allowing his listeners to experience many different cultural, social, spatial, and economic narratives found in his songs.

Tom Waits' music from *Swordfishtrombones* onwards, defies the norm in terms of production values, song structure, instrumentation, and vocal timbre, as far as the glossy, highly produced, three minute, verse-chorus-verse-chorus, pop-rock radio standards go and is often ignored by all but college radio stations. Sanitized covers of his songs like "Downtown Train" by Rod Stewart or "Ol '55" by The Eagles are much more readily embraced than his original jagged performances. The hoary rasp of Tom Waits' voice and crude production values bring an element of sincerity and a haunting evocation of humanity to his songs. If his songs were to be performed by a vocally polished singer with slick, highly produced accompaniment, his lyrics and music may come across as contrived or even ridiculous. Throughout his musical career, he has striven for grit and texture rather than finesse and aural sheen, and has diligently worked to create a musical language in which his use of genre and instrumentation were as emotionally and aesthetically evocative as his distinctive voice, lyrics, and melodies.

i. *NIGHT ON EARTH*: A NOMADIC SOUNDTRACK

Jim Jarmusch's film, *Night on Earth*, for which Tom Waits provides the soundtrack, explores the simultaneity of an urban experience in one night, in five different locales: Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Rome, and Helsinki. This soundtrack also demonstrates how, for Waits working to complement Jarmusch's minimalist sensibility, minute details such as changes in timbre can express and evoke larger meanings. His instrumental pieces centre around very similar melodic themes and contours and the creaks and groans of accordions, harmoniums, Stinson band organs, bass clarinets, saxophones, horns, stalking basslines, and tin cans.

The story takes place in a taxi in each of the cities. The use of the taxi as the setting from which each city is experienced "both captures the transitory nature of urban experience – unpredictable meetings and journeys – and foregrounds what is usually deemed insignificant, trivial, everyday, as central to this film" (Mahoney 1997, 178). Like all of Tom Waits' characters, the ordinary and insignificant are immortalized in song and given importance, the act of "getting by" is made extraordinary. The taxi driver is a wanderer, an urban vagabond, scouring the city streets for his or her next customer and hoping for a meaningful interaction with somebody. The itinerant lifestyles of taxi drivers are based on brief encounters, an absence of lasting intimacy, and they are commiserated only by their own lonesome thoughts. Taxi drivers are uniquely deep characters: not only are they themselves unusual and misfit characters, but since their days are spent weaving through the tangled grind and wheeze of the cities they occupy, they accumulate interesting encounters with eccentric and radically differing people.

Jarmusch highlights the stereotypes of each city by showing clips of architecture, design, and landscapes that typify and are exemplary of the location being depicted. The story in each city is also representative of what social experiences would be stereotypically expected to manifest in each city. Similarly, as "it is true that different cities, like different countries, make different noises" (Street 1995, 259), the " mood music" composed by Tom Waits is comprised of a repeated Alberti Bass type of patterned accompaniment and the same melody line is used for each of the cities with slight variations and reorchestrations to resemble ethnic or nationalistic musical stereotypes. The use of the same melody and basic accompaniment for each of the settings for the scenes signifies the theme of the taxi and also works to amplify and unify the concurrence of urban, dreamer, and drifter experiences.

In Los Angeles, the city of dreams, Winona Ryder plays a grungy cabby whose modest life goals surprisingly do not include being discovered as a movie star. Ryder's

ordinary character is given the opportunity to become extraordinary when, by chance, her next fare happens to be a busy and highly influential talent agent. The meeting for Ryder is incidental, and in the end she rejects the offer the talent agent has proposed and drives off in search of other dreams. The instrumentation of the music for the scene in Los Angeles consists of a bass, cello, and piano, together playing the steady patterned accompaniment and a distorted electric guitar playing the melody line. The guitar stretches out the melody line, fading in and out of the foreground, allowing for feedback and distortion as the camera scans the city's stagnant, smoggy landscape of ageing bungalows, shabby desert/ranch style architecture, kitschy restaurant mascots, and wearied strip malls. The feeling is of isolation amidst the vast sea of people and broken hopes and dreams. The driving accompaniment gives a sense of restlessness and urgency typical of a vagabond's need to keep moving. The raw guitar sound is one you might expect to find in the sound of a local California punk rock band, or by a busker playing an old electric guitar through a distorted 5 watt amp under the flashing neon sign of a liquor store late at night. The clear, then crumbling into distorted, guitar sound captures the visual presentation of the fatigued, polluted, artificial, escapist, and somewhat jaded cityscape and citizens of Los Angeles.

The light-hearted German circus clown turned cab driver played by Armin Mueller-Stahl in the New York scene is a newcomer to the city, filled with an optimistic view of America. His first customer is Giancarlo Esposito, who is eager to get home to Brooklyn, and warns him of the perils and dangers of New York City and its inhabitants. The taxi driver's sanguine optimism is slowly dissolved once his fare has reached his destination and he drives away alone into the fearful and alienating hostile war zone seething with crime, vandalism, brutality, injustice, and sirens. The New York mood music contains the same instrumentation for its accompaniment as Los Angeles, but with the bass playing more frequently and more pronounced. The dirty electric guitar sound is replaced with a single

jazzy muted trumpet playing the melody line creating the atmosphere of an after hours jazz club beneath the streets of Manhattan. The trumpet is cold and harsh, reflective of the scenes of destruction, emotional detachment, and violence portrayed. There is a hollow ambient reverberation to the trumpet sound creating a sense of smallness in a large space, darkness, urban streets, danger, and solitude.

In Paris, the taxi driver played by Isaach De Bankolé, on a stressful night with difficult customers, picks up a blind woman confident she would not cause him the same grief as his last fare. The blind woman is also a wanderer, travelling through the thick night just to experience the smell and feel of the city of lights and to feel alive and passionate. Naïve about the extent to which blindness incapacitates his customer, the taxi driver bombards her with a multitude of questions like an inquisitive schoolboy. Distracted by this strange and exciting individual, the taxi driver gets into an accident as he leaves his fare by the river. The music for the Paris scene maintains the tempo and instrumentation of the musical accompaniment used for the Los Angeles and New York scenes; the principle instrument here, however, is (predictably) the accordion, a much used musical signifier of outdoor French cafes, invoking a sense of retreat to intimate spaces, sensuality, and leisure.

Roberto Benigni portrays a vivacious and flamboyant Italian taxi driver in the scene from Rome. Often alone on a late shift with few fares, this exuberant taxi driver, who contends this isolation with an active escapist imagination, picks up a priest making his way home late at night and tries to make a real connection with the priest, exposing his deepest darkest secrets. However, upon hearing Benigni's outrageous confessions, the priest has a fatal heart attack and the taxi driver is forced to dispose of the body. This frenetic experience results in the music for Rome being of a much thicker orchestration and significantly faster tempo than that of the music of Los Angeles, New York or Paris. The style is rambunctious, humorous, and carnivalesque. The same accompaniment pattern is still present with a variety

of instruments alternating playing the melody line. An abundance of percussion instruments and "toys" such as whistles, bells, buzzers, etc., are incorporated into this light-hearted and comical musical selection as well as a drum kit, trumpet, harmonium, and guitar which together are suggestive of the zeal, lively exuberance, exaggerated gestures, and theatricality which can be found in Italian culture.

In the final scene set in Helsinki, deep in the industrial end of town, a cab driver played by Matti Pellonpää is near the end of his dreary, mundane shift, and picks up three drunks who become a captive audience for his heartbreaking tale of loss and despair. The coldness of the climate and the thick blanket of snow in the sleeping city create a dismal feeling of isolation, embodied for the wandering cab driver in the inescapable personal loss that he feels no one else can truly share or understand. Escape is unattainable in the sparse layout of the city, where the large spaces between the buildings and people aggrandize the pressing seclusion of Helsinki. The Helsinki mood has a heavier driving bass line and the cello is more present than in previous scenes. The sound is cold and isolated with the melody line played first on the clarinet with a breathy tone, and then later the pan pipes, muted trumpet, and accordion interweave with the melody line and new material creating dissonances and a desolate, isolated atmosphere.

The sounds and arrangements that Tom Waits uses in the soundtrack to *Night On Earth* complement the nighttime visuals they accompany and help to enrich and develop the narratives, atmospheres, and characters. The mostly instrumental score (there are three vocal numbers) elicits a brooding and even disturbing atmosphere where cacophony, dissonance, and percussive clatter float through unusual time signatures, nostalgic European and Gypsy waltzes, and idiosyncratic jazz.

ii. DIRTY WATER ON A SWORDFISHTROMBONE

Tom Waits' music from his early years was generally set within the context of a piano based jazz ensemble. His arrangements, ranging from solo piano, solo bass, solo saxophone, folky acoustic guitar, bass and saxophone, piano and bass, or full ensemble with drum kit, were representative of the deliberate drunken beat poet, vagabond persona Tom Waits was trying to build and maintain at the time. This persona gave Waits a platform from which to perform rather than represent his characters, being a colourful narrator for his interesting stories rather than subject matter. Along with his disparaging and observant humour and innate wisdom, his cigarette-smoking, bourbon-drinking, showman persona, which to varying degrees reflected his actual lifestyle, inspired a cult following. A prolific composer and lyricist, in this period Tom Waits produced a wealth of notable songs that were well-constructed and filled with wonderful stories and intriguing characters. His musical choices and scat-style vocals mirrored his early seduction by the beat poets like Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady and jazzers like Lord Buckley and Thelonius Monk.

The Early Years V1, *The Early Years V2*, and *Closing Time* all take the perspective of a road-wearied, heartbroken traveller who has stopped off in a bar at the side of the road to tell his stories of woe. Considering the communicative power of silence and space to inform audiences, Tom Waits often makes use of a very minimalist scoring of his music to draw attention to the characters and story being told or to create an ad hoc atmosphere as found in *Small Change* in the songs "Small Change" which only has a saxophone accompaniment, or "Pasties and a G-String" which uses only drums for accompaniment. Songs like "Poncho's Lament," "Had Me a Girl," "In Between Love," "So It Goes," "Old Shoes," "Blue Skies," and "Hope I Don't Fall in Love With You" are all accompanied by acoustic guitar which creates a very intimate and personal feeling, typical of the singer-songwriter genre to which Tom Waits belonged at the time. The chord progressions and harmonies are a simple, yet

deceptively appropriate counterbalance to the melodic structures and gnarled voice which overlays them. The dust on Tom Waits' shoes is evident in the often purposely out of tune guitar strings which complement the vagabond wanderer characters he is trying to depict in his songs.

From *The Heart of Saturday Night* to *Heartattack and Vine*, Tom Waits experimented with many different variations on the same theme in terms of instrumentation, arrangements and style which focused on jazz based compositions realized by ensembles as small as solo piano or saxophone, to full orchestra, piano, drums, and bass. Perhaps his most personally emotive songs and ballads were accompanied only by piano to create, like his acoustic guitar songs, a very intimate and personal atmosphere as found in songs like "Lonely," "Jitterbug Boy," "Bad Liver and a Broken Heart," "Burma Shave," and "Christmas Card from a Hooker in Minneapolis." The piano sounds used by Tom Waits are always that of a very real, abused, and slightly out of tune piano that one would expect to find in the corner of a bar. The basic instrument combination of piano and upright bass is utilized in such songs as "Ghosts of Saturday Night," "The Piano Has Been Drinking (Not Me)," and "A Sight for Sore Eyes." The acoustic bass adds a fullness and weight to the accompaniment, integrates an additional jazz element, and allows for the sentiment of these slow ballads to emerge from a space somewhat less personal than the hollow solo accompaniments. The addition of saxophone, muted trumpet, or slide guitar to the piano and bass combination in the songs "Muriel," "Rosie," and "Shiver Me Timbers" functioned to heighten the emotive potential of the lyrics.

In collaboration with orchestral arrangers Jerry Yester, Mike Melvoin, and Bob Alcivar, lush orchestral arrangements found their way into Tom Waits' songs. Like all string arrangements used in popular music, they added a somewhat forced sentimentality and fullness to his music, though at times, genuinely provided the necessary dramatic qualities of

heightened sensitivity and tenderness. The subtle string arrangements used in "Martha," "Grapefruit Moon," "Invitation to the Blues," "Tom Traubert's Blues," "Foreign Affair," "San Diego Serenade," "Kentucky Avenue," and "Jersey Girl" functioned to augment and complement the piano and bass foundations of these songs. Less sparingly used in songs like "I Wish I Was in New Orleans," "Please Call Me Baby," "Cinny's Waltz," "On the Nickel" and "Ruby's Arms"(complete with brass choir), the string arrangements are almost overwhelming and inflect a feeling of cinematic emotional expressiveness. The somewhat contrived cinematic feel of these songs is forgiven when placed in context with Tom Waits' version of the Broadway musical piece "Somewhere" from *West Side Story*, where such diegetic expression is expected. The contrast of the ornate sweetness of the strings with Tom Waits' harsh cigarette and alcohol ravaged vocal chords and his cynical observational vignettes is perhaps the only thing that prevented these string arrangements from becoming too sentimental or mawkish. The strings were added to enhance the emotive potential of the music, yet it is the honesty of Tom Waits' voice that truly expresses the emotions he wishes to communicate. To the furthest extreme, "Potter's Field" makes use of a full orchestra, upright bass, and extensive percussion section and could be considered a fully realized orchestral tone poem.

The albums *Blue Valentine* and *Heartattack and Vine* contain small musical breakthroughs for Tom Waits in that he expands his use of different musical genres, explores the possibilities of the electric guitar, allows the drummer to use sticks instead of brushes, and creates a fuller sound with larger arrangements. The instrumentation for the title song "Blue Valentines" is comprised of solo electric guitar, signalling a definite break from his heavy reliance upon piano in his compositional process. These albums begin to have more of a rock band and R&B feel, though still within the context of Waits' earlier gritty and jagged aesthetic. With a basic instrumentation of electric guitar, organ or electric piano, bass, and

drums as found in the songs, "Heartattack and Vine," "Downtown," and "Jersey Girl," Tom Waits gained a harder edge to his sound and stepped into the role of a rock performer rather than that of a singer-songwriter. The addition of saxophone to these electric guitar based arrangements reinforced his jazz foundations and occurred in the songs "Romeo is Bleeding," "Wrong Side of the Road," "Whistlin' Past the Graveyard," and "A Sweet Little Bullet from a Pretty Blue Gun." Though these musical developments were not by any means revolutionary in terms of what was going on in the music industry at the time, they marked a definite movement into new musical territory for Tom Waits, which would eventually lead to the experimentation from which *Swordfishtrombones* would emerge.

The transition into the percussive musical styles and varied instrumentation of *Swordfishtrombones* alienated some of Waits' audience who had grown terribly fond of his piano and orchestral accompaniments from his earlier years. When questioned about this transition, he replied,

> I don't know if I can reconstruct it really – it wasn't religious or anything. You get to an impasse creatively at some point, and you can either ignore it or deal with it. And it's like anything, you go down road and…hopefully, there's a series of tunnels. I'd started feeling like my music was very separate from myself. My life had changed and my music had stayed pretty much its own thing. I thought I had to find a way to bring it closer. Not so much with my life as with my imagination. (Rowland 1987, 84)

As "one thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs," Waits submerged himself into a drunk persona and jazz idiom however, as he grew musically and as a lyricist, he became more and more comfortable in uncertainty and asserting many different personas and delving into very disparate musical styles and genres (Bauman 1996, 19).

Generally as his musical style began to advance, the types of characters that Tom Waits wrote about remained similar, but the situations in which he placed them began to radically change from barrooms to Western ghost towns, train cars with mariachi bands, and exotic street corners. As the characters explored greater freedom of movement and

dimension, so did the music, moving from swampy blues, to skeletal funeral marches, to ballads punctuated by chickens. The further the characters ran from home, the further Tom Waits broke from his barfly, jazz poet image and sounds, and ventured into conjuring up eccentric characters and new sounds.

His musical influences drifted away from the Beat generation and moved towards the innovations and experimentation of the composer, Harry Partch and collaborations with Francis Thumm, who played gramolodium with the Harry Partch Ensemble. His passion for imperfection and grit flourished in his music as he professed a strong desire to musically

> step on the negative. Grind it into the gutter and put that through the projector. I always love it, it's what Keith Richards calls the 'hair in the gate' at a movie. You know when everyone's watching a movie and all of a sudden a piece of hair catches in the projector and everyone's going, 'Wow, look at that hair.' And then Whooh! and it flies out. And that's like, that was the most exciting moment in the film. (Waits 1998)

His songs lyrically have always captured the element of human detritus, but now Tom Waits is also salvaging musical debris and making it integral to the expression of his art. His creative process extended into the very mechanics of sound recording where he was able to not only expose, but proudly display the rough edges and grit which are essential to the vitality of his works.

In his original conception of instrumentation and genres, Tom Waits once was the child who when given a toy piano would happily bang away for hours on it. Now Tom Waits is like the child who would ignore the piano completely and play with the box, bubble packaging, and wrapping paper instead. This movement beyond the realm of knowing and comfort is integral to Tom Waits' musical development wherein he picks up instruments and objects he doesn't understand or know how to play, in order to explore new ways of musical expression independent from learned techniques or performance habits. Otherwise he feels, "[y]our hands are like dogs going to the same places they've been. You have to be careful

when playing is no longer in the mind but in the fingers, going to happy places. You have to break them of their habits or you don't explore, you only play what is confident and pleasing" (Richard 1994, 50). He allows himself the creative freedom to stand in "a studio with instruments you've spent thousands of dollars renting, to walk over to the bathroom and the sound of the lid coming down on the toilet is more appealing than that seven-thousand-dollar bass drum. And you use it. You have to be aware of that" (Rowland 1987, 90). For Waits', his repertoire of sonic capabilities greatly extended as everyday objects and sounds were re-examined and took on exciting new meanings when utilized in a musical context.

His instrumentation and arrangement choices began to centre around a kind of junkyard instrumentation and the embrace of found elements, based upon what he felt were the particular sonic needs of the songs, rather than using predictable variations on an already established jazz idiom. Tom Waits admitted, "I have an infatuation with melody, but also with dissonance" and that he is "attracted to things that fall outside of the practical domain of music…I like hearing the orchestra tune up. That for me is the show" (Hilburn 1999, 58). Bass marimbas, brake drums, metal aunglongs, harmoniums, chairs, glass harmonicas, and parade drums, played by seasoned studio musicians like Victor Feldman, Fred Tackett, and Stephen Hodges, encapsulated the wanderer character and became the foundations of Waits' instrumentation, a far departure from clearly defined piano, bass, and drums arrangements.

The characters also began to take on a different role in Tom Waits' compositional process from 1983's *Swordfishtrombones* onwards. These changes were subtle but integral as Tom Waits reveals, "I like characters and things that re-occur, but it's not a real song score. The songs have a feeling of existing within the same aquarium – that's all. There's just a little more caulking compound involved this time" (Graham 1983, 18). The music became carefully crafted and particular to each of the eccentric characters inhabiting the stories being told and every song was a very individual entity, requiring its own special

attention and treatment. *Swordfishtrombones*, *Rain Dogs*, *Frank's Wild Years*, *Bone Machine*, and *The Black Rider* all contained a plethora of musical styles ranging from crazed marches, to lilting ballads, to eerie spoken word pieces which worked to portray the deviant, outcast, misguided, and battered characters that occupied his lyrics.

The first sounds that radiate from Waits' *Swordfishtrombones* album are the wooden clank of a bass marimba and the brass attack of a baritone horn in the song "Underground." The heavy and relentless thump of a large bass drum gives the feeling of a thousand feet marching along together and the electric guitar contributes an urban metallic colour to balance the exotic wooden sounds of the marimba. "Shore Leave" is musically very simple, but is abounding in textures, tone colours, and mysterious musical effects, such as the screech of a metal chair on a cement floor. The low rumble of a muted trombone gives the impression of cars passing by on a gaunt, wet street, the rice in the bass drum creates sounds of waves and rain, metal aunglongs imitate the sounds of metal wind chimes or tin cans rattling in the breeze, and the wooden marimbas add a subtle element of exoticism also found on the title track "Swordfishtrombone."

For the quirky instrumental piece, "Dave the Butcher," the Hammond B-3 organ and bass boo bams work together to create a highly grinding nightmarish carnival sound. Similarly, the other brief instrumental on *Swordfishtrombones*, "Just Another Sucker on the Vine" with trumpet and harmonium, also has the wheeze and lilt of carnival music and easily lends itself to the quirky images of a circus performer high up on the tight rope with a hat and an umbrella and intones the more precious and delicate countenance of the carnival. These instrumental pieces provide a couple of relieving big top asides in an otherwise harrowing emotional journey.

"Johnsburg, Illinois" and "Soldier's Things" mark brief encounters with the gentle melodic piano and bass combination and lyrical style in which Tom Waits is well versed.

The desolation of the story of a dying small town in "Town With No Cheer" is magnified by the clap of a Freedom Bell, solitary bagpipes at the beginning of the song, and the use of serene, mellifluous harmonium and synthesizer sounds throughout the song.

Dramatically switching styles, the brass band, bass drums, snare drums, cymbals, and glockenspiel of "In the Neighborhood" create the sounds of an outdoor parade band. "Gin Soaked Boy" is a venture into a more heavily blues influenced style with very prominent electric guitar sounds and heavy vocals sitting further back in the mix, mimicking earlier blues recording techniques. The urgency of "Trouble's Braids" is amplified by its very percussive instrumentation consisting of an African talking drum, parade bass drums, and acoustic bass. The album closes with another instrumental called "Rainbirds," similar in style to the piano and acoustic bass ballads, but with a unique glass harmonica introduction that seems to clear away the crash and bang of the songs that preceded and gives the song a new ambient space in which to exist. *Swordfishtrombones* was an important turning point for Tom Waits in his musical career and provided a strong and strange musical foundation from which *Rain Dogs* could be built.

Fluctuating between being whimsical and sinister, *Rain Dogs* continues the adventure to new and exciting musical destinations with Waits' incorporation of unusual instruments in his arrangements and his escalating reliance on percussion, drums, and theatricality. The album opens with an ominous and tattered march tempo polka called "Singapore," fuelled by drums, double bass, and trombone. Marimbas, electric guitars, and various percussion instruments embellish the plodding accompaniment with loose and improvised melodies and interesting harmonies. The jump rope spin off, "Clap Hands," is also heavily percussive and is powered by the wooden attack of marimbas and various metallic percussion instruments. An interesting melange of sounds and colours permeate "Cemetery Polka" with such instruments used together as trombone, electric guitar, Farfisa organ, wood blocks, cymbals,

accordion, double bass, and parade drums, all with their own seemingly random and independent musical lines until the unison crash on the very last note of the piece.

A rumba constructed out of an assortment of hand drums, shakers, cymbals and temple blocks is the rhythmic foundation of "Jockey Full of Bourbon." Like many of the songs on *Rain Dogs*, the electric guitar on this song takes on a lead rather than rhythmic role, playing distinctly individual single-note melodies. "Tango Till They're Sore" utilizes a minimalist setting of a lurching tango, played on piano, acoustic bass, and trombone, with the piano part being exemplary of Tom Waits' incipient affinity for the strained beauty of mistakes and distractions. Similar in style, "9th and Hennepin" is a dark spoken word piece with a disjunct and "mistake" riddled accompaniment on piano, clarinet, double bass, marimba, metal percussion and bowed saw.

Tom Waits' earlier style makes an unabashedly nostalgic appearance in the song "Time" with acoustic guitar, upright bass, and accordion providing a simple and unassuming accompaniment to the melancholic lyrics. A remarkably ornate accordion flourish introduces the title track "Rain Dogs" which then settles into a steady rock beat supplied by bass and drums, with the instruments trombone, guitar, accordion, and marimba trading off accompaniment and solo roles. The energetic big band instrumental "Midtown" performed by The Uptown Horns, who also appear in "Anywhere I Lay My Head," consists of screeching alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and rhythm section. This instrumental piece is incredibly cinematic, expressive, and "film noirish" in style, and is surprisingly not out of place in the eclectic collection of songs that form this album. "Gun Street Girl" has a rural blues feel that could be found in the shade of a farmhouse porch, produced by the sounds of a banjo, sparse acoustic bass, drums, and metallic roadside percussion. Tom Waits fully acknowledges and submits to fairly straight-ahead rock 'n' roll sounds and rhythms in "Big Black Mariah," "Hang Down Your Head," "Walking Spanish,"

"Downtown Train," "Blind Love," and the upbeat "Union Square" which features Keith Richards (Rolling Stones) on guitar. This attention to rock forms was also indicative of Waits' musical development, whereby he both conceived of songs in terms of a set ensemble or band, as well as working with the creative contributions of many different performers in the recording studio.

The album *Frank's Wild Years* was released in 1987 following the stage production in Chicago in 1986 and continued in the same direction of theatrical eclecticism found on *Swordfishtrombones* and *Rain Dogs*. *Frank's Wild Years* is Tom Waits' first attempt at writing an operetta, working extensively with theatrical styles, and creating the basis for a full theatrical production that extends beyond the realm of a purely aural experience. With the strange amalgamation of carnival sounds, gospel melodies, cabaret schmaltz, barrelhouse blues, and the introduction of instruments and effects like such as the optigon, melotron, prepared piano, megaphone, and rooster, Tom Waits experiments with new compositional and musical styles in combination with theatrical conventions.

The alto horn, tenor saxophone, guitar, bass, and drums instrumentation of "Hang On St. Christopher" and "Straight to the Top (Rhumba)" is indicative of the basic ensemble that Tom Waits' manipulates throughout this album. "Blow Wind Blow" is a comparatively sparse arrangement with bullhorn vocals, pump organ, alto horn, banjo, and glockenspiel coming together to form the soundtrack of a disturbing reverie. The song "Temptation" falls into a heavy, rhythmic groove with a prominent acoustic bass and percussion foundation providing an appropriate backing for the raspy edge of Waits' falsetto vocals. Multiple horn lines follow and reinforce the melodic patterns of the bass, with the horns also playing short backing riffs, and the guitar parts interweave throughout the song to create a very thick and rich musical texture.

"Innocent When You Dream (Barroom)" is a simple, melodic, drinking song and has a subdued accompaniment of pump organ, violin, and bass, broken only by bright major triad shots on the piano. The reprise of this song is found at the end of the album and has a similar arrangement, but has the coarse grainy sound of an old 78 and only a single vocal line. "I'll Be Gone" has a ponderous dance-like feel, and is curiously introduced and occasionally accompanied by a rooster. The strong rhythmic accordion part propels this song and adds an energetic impulse, along with the relentless marimba and guitar parts, which reflect the sense of adventure depicted by the lyrics.

The sparse arrangement of guitars, bass, and the occasional sound effects on "Yesterday is Here" creates the feeling of a soundtrack to a western movie. "Please Wake Me Up" is a peculiar lullaby set to the carnivalesque wheeze of a melotron, the strange sound effects of an optigon, the grunts and growls of a deviant baritone horn, and the whisper of an acoustic bass. Similarly, "Frank's Theme" also comes across as a lullaby and has the thinnest accompaniment on the album with just pump organ shaping the gentle dreamscape of this song. A brilliant accordion flourish opens the song "More Than Rain" which continues with the varying juxtaposition of many different sounds and performance styles, such as the lyrical accordion, guitar, orchestral chimes, prepared piano, and optigon melodies set against the cacophonous and grating baritone horn part.

"Way Down in the Hole" is a gospel number consisting of rhythmic saxophone shots and driving bass and percussion lines throughout the song with a brief electric guitar solo. An Eastern flavour emerges from the rhythms and melodies established in "Telephone Call from Istanbul" by the plucked banjo, bass, and drums, and is eventually reinforced by the screaming Farfisa organ part that enters just before the end of the song. With a guitar sound similar to Waits' popular "Downtown Train," "Cold Cold Ground" possesses a modest rhythmic guitar part and a repetitive bass line which are impressively offset by the virtuosic

accordion performance featuring David Hidalgo from Los Lobos. "Train Song" is also a slow revelatory ballad cradled in the gentle, primarily chordal, accompaniment of piano, pump organ, accordion, alto horn, and bass.

In 1988, Tom Waits released a film and album entitled *Big Time*, which was a live performance Tom Waits' described as a, "musicotheatrical experience played in dreamtime," and its ensuing soundtrack. While visually and sonically the setting for the recording may have been a seamy barroom in any large city, it was actually recorded live in five different cities, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dublin, Stockholm, and Berlin. Most of the songs were previously released on Tom Waits' last three albums, *Swordfishtrombones*, *Rain Dogs*, and *Frank's Wild Years*, and were recorded live to 24 track or simply cassette, with the exception of two songs, "Strange Weather" and "Falling Down," which were previously unreleased studio recordings. With the limitations imposed by using a set live orchestra, many of the rousing versions of songs on this live album are vastly different in feel than their original studio conceptions. For *Big Time*, Tom Waits' band consisted of Michael Blair on drums, percussion, bongos, and brake drums, Ralph Carney on saxophones, clarinets, baritone, and horn, Greg Cohen on electric bass, basstarda, and alto horn, Mark Ribot on guitars, banjo, and trumpet, and Willie Schwarz on accordion, Hammond organ, sitar and conga. Tom Waits' bullish roar and captivating delivery are backed by this powerful, transmutable, and highly energetic ensemble which seamlessly transforms from song to song to support and amplify Waits' musical display of his many different characters and their narratives.

Almost five years after *Frank's Wild Years* was released in 1987, Tom Waits ended his musical hiatus and gathered together sixteen hellish, bone rattling tracks to form the austere album, *Bone Machine*. Though dark and ominous, *Bone Machine* is not ultimately or absolutely macabre, being at times musically whimsical and lyrically humorous. Waits' increased experimentation and use of found instruments, copious percussion, and junkyard

orchestration allowed his music to envelop the notion of the wanderer and his songs began to sound like they were performed at the location of the story, with the music banged out on whatever strikeable object happened to be around rather than being carefully crafted and pre-arranged. Musically, Tom Waits balanced his screeches and howls with an abundance of unconventional percussion parts and heavy bass lines that effectively reflected the brutal images of violence, death, murder, suicide, and Judgement Day that permeate the songs from this album. His tactile compositional style progressed even further in terms of embedding his characters and their stories into the realm of his music, allowing his lyrics and narratives to dictate and shape the musical accompaniment. Tom Waits cultivated and refined his narrative storytelling abilities so that they extended beyond the lyrical domain, penetrated and informed his musical choices, formulated his musical language, and became as emotionally electrified as his voice and lyrics. Every groan, crash, and rattle worked to advance the fateful narratives or evoke the desired atmospheres.

"Earth Died Screaming" sets the tone for the remainder of the album with its intriguing percussion-oriented instrumentation. This arrangement includes sticks, which create the aural effect of rattling bones amidst the onset of chaos and ruin, electric guitar, and electric and acoustic bass (featuring Les Claypool from Primus). Mortality is pondered in the sombre song "Dirt In The Ground," with the harsh lyrics overlaying the uncomplicated accompaniments of a muddy sounding piano and bass, highlighted by the reedy sighs of a bass clarinet, alto saxophone, and tenor saxophone. Tom Waits' raucous percussive style is captured in the uproarious ode "Such a Scream," which primarily consists of drums (featuring Brain from Primus), additional percussion, saxophone, and distorted guitar supporting his dishevelled howl. "All Stripped Down" is powered by piercing maracas, distorted guitar, and bass. The distorted guitar also follows along with Tom Waits' backing vocals, emphasizes the megaphone chant of "all stripped down," and helps to contrast these

vocal qualities with his shrieking falsetto. Piano, guitar, modest percussion, and bass blend together sonically in the bitter ballad, "Who Are You," which has a strikingly rich and warm mood that is severely contrasted to the atmosphere of the previous songs on the album.

An assortment of clunky percussion and the haunting sounds of a chamberlain produce the suicidal soundscape of the eerie spoken-word piece entitled "The Ocean Doesn't Want Me Today." The evangelical whoop, "Jesus Gonna Be Here," is an incongruous gospel style of blues conveyed by an upright bass and a street corner guitar sound. "A Little Rain" and "Whistle Down the Wind" are stirring ballads of longing and regret effectively imparted by the inundating pedal steel guitar lines sweeping over the unadorned piano and acoustic bass. The themes of madness and brutality pervade "In The Colosseum" and are supported by megaphone vocals, abrasive drums, chamberlain effects, and the unusual sounds of a clattering, metallic, crucifix-shaped instrument called a conundrum.

The pretentious boasts of the character in "Goin' Out West" sit well in its aggressive rock 'n roll arrangement, fashioned primarily from the impetus and steady grind of the drums and bass, with the guitar sounds varying from being heavily distorted to possessing the pulsating twang of surf pop. Contrasted to the urban wail of "Goin Out West," a very rural mood is suggested by the plucked banjo and clunky percussion of "Murder in the Red Barn." The cinematic feel of an outlaw's theme in a spaghetti western is produced by a basic country shuffle and a guitar, bass, and drums arrangement in "Black Wings" which chronicles the rumours surrounding a mysterious bandit. Upbeat and rambunctious, the rebellious spirit of the anthem "I Don't Want To Grow Up" is assumed by acoustic and electric guitar and upright bass in a straight-ahead rock rhythm. Keith Richards also makes an appearance on guitar and vocals on *Bone Machine* in the final song, "That Feel." An ultimate exultation of individuality and the wanderer, "That Feel" has a basic arrangement of guitar, bass, and

drums that unobtrusively support the poignant lyrics and impassioned vocals and deftly brings the album to a close.

Tom Waits' next album, *The Black Rider*, was Waits' second operetta and although it premiered in Hamburg in 1990, he did not produce a commercial release of the music from the score until 1993. A dark and brooding rock opera, *The Black Rider* derived its story line from the German folktale *Der Freischutz*, upon which Carl Maria von Weber's opera of the same name is based. *The Black Rider* revels in the beauty of dissonance, stilted grandiosity, and the sour wheeze of a bizarre carnival orchestra, informed by Robert Wilson's esoteric exploration of German expressionism. The music was originally performed in Hamburg by the "Devil's Rubato Band," which was a diverse ensemble of musicians brought together from very divergent backgrounds and musical experiences, ranging from performers with strict classical training to wholly untrained street buskers. The "Rubato West" musicians from San Francisco, like the "Devil's Rubato Band," took on a very crude approach to the music, at times being forced to abandon the scores altogether in order to achieve the moods and sounds Tom Waits wanted on the studio recording.

The music from *The Black Rider* stretches across a diffuse and decadent musical canvas encompassing terrifying themes of insanity and bloody images of death, as well as depicting fragile emotional journeys. The music is generally heavily percussive and indicative of specific scenes or moods, as exemplified by the sonically pictorial "Gospel Train," and was conceived in a theatrical setting that required it to function diegetically, adding depth and meaning to onstage action, intensifying the mood, and assisting with character development. The carnival-inspired pieces like "Lucky Day Overture," "The Black Rider," "Russian Dance," and "Carnival" utilize fairly large orchestrations consisting of such instruments as saxophone, strings, French horn, trombone, clarinet, bassoon, banjo, organ, chamberlain, guitar, bass, and percussion. The ballads lean towards thinner orchestrations,

such as those found in the songs: "November," which opens with the quivering beauty of a lone singing saw later joined by piano, bass, accordion, and banjo, "The Briar and the Rose," which is accompanied primarily by organ, with the addition of bass, clarinet, and then viola on each new verse, and "The Last Rose of Summer," which has the sparse orchestration of chamberlain, organ and bass. Tom Waits' fondness for jazz idioms surfaces in the songs like "I'll Shoot the Moon," and "Flash Pan Hunter," but they appear with a dark and fantastical mood. *The Black Rider* embodies the torturous laments and regrets of broken souls with the rhythms of a skeletal drum, the dissonant melodies of piercing shrieks, and the seductive sheen of the devil.

After the release of the grisly score for *The Black Rider*, Tom Waits collaborated once again with Robert Wilson on an operetta entitled *Alice*. His work on this project is not yet available for commercial release, but continued to further his experimentation with unusual instruments and sounds. With the exception of a few guest appearances and soundtrack contributions, it would be another long hiatus before Tom Waits released his next full length album, *Mule Variations*, in 1999. Musically, *Mule Variations* is a conglomeration of Tom Waits' different stylistic explorations spanning field hollers, tortured blues, blistery jazz, disarming odes, and late-nineties rock. In addition to the percussive clank and corrosive rattle Tom Waits became adept at in *Bone Machine*, *Mule Variations* possesses many maudlin ballads and a new bluesy soundscape he aptly described as "surruralism," which is a combination of surreal and rural elements. Continuing to expand his eclectic instrumental combinations, Tom Waits imbues *Mule Variations* with unidentifiable sounds often so obscured and distorted that their origin is unintelligible, and even goes so far as to wade into the technological domain of sampling and programming.

The industrial abrasion of "Big In Japan" starts off the album with a gritty rock bang and a staggering groove backed by Primus. The instrumentation is typical of any rock band,

with guitar, bass, and drums, and the occasional saxophone and trumpet riffs. Tom Waits' signature bullhorn croak and more aggressive rock sounds complement the bragging of a superficial and unsubstantial icon who has found momentary fame and cult stardom in Japan. "Lowside of the Road" is a dusty blues ramble set by guitar and African drums called Chumbus and Dousegoni. Optigon sounds, programming effects, the clatter of a vibraslap, and the snarl of a tightly muted trumpet infuse the slow drawl of the lyrics. "Get Behind the Mule" is a bluesy dirt road groove played on guitar, bass, percussion, and harmonica, befitting the surruralist theme of this album. The title phrase even originates from pointed advice Robert Johnson's parents gave their shiftless son, "You got to get behind the mule in the morning and plow."

With shaker percussion, bass, and guitars, the parlour ballad "Hold On" stylistically retreats to the familiar Waits shuffle and sound of sentimental songs like "Downtown Train." Percolated in an undisguised humanity, the compassionate and tender ballads, "House Where Nobody Lives," "Georgia Lee," "Picture in a Frame," and "Take It With Me," all have the basic instrumentation of a warm bass and an antiquated sounding, acoustic piano bracing the indelible incision of Tom Waits' poignant lyrics and gnarling vocals. The lonely lament of "House Where Nobody Lives" is a slow waltz laden with lead guitar stylings over the gentle piano and bass lilt. The piano and bass accompaniment of "Picture in a Frame" is inflected by the gentle chordal lines of alto and baritone saxophones in the second half of the song. Similarly, a violin and a second, bright, high-pitched piano sound are added to enhance the mood of the touching eulogy, "Georgia Lee." The unabashed devotion of "Take It With Me" is enhanced by Tom Waits' own lo-fi production style which does not strive to mask the verity of the instrument or the humanity of the player, as the pedals on the piano thump and creak throughout the piece, creating a palatable sense of intimacy. The simple, affecting

blues of "Pony" is played on guitar, pump organ, Dobro, and harmonica, producing a rural mood that is incredibly expressive of a lost and bruised persona haunted by loneliness.

The gritty, rusty blues racket of "Cold Water" is created by electric guitar, bass, drums, and field holler style vocals, capturing the visceral experience of a vagabond continually getting into mischief while riding the rails. Random garbled percussion, radio static, metallic clinks and shivers, wooden taps, breathy reeds, and turntable samples provide the disconcerting and esoteric soundscape that underscores the dark spoken-word piece, "What's He Building?" By the time the minimalist, surruralist blues of "Chocolate Jesus" is heard on *Mule Variations*, the present and past are irrevocably intertwined and all musical elements blend together, with acoustic guitars, bass, and harmonica sounding as timelessly expressive as the electric guitars, percussion, samples, turntables, and programming found on the songs "Black Market Baby," "Eyeball Kid," and "Filipino Box Spring Hog." Only Tom Waits would decide to make a leap into the technological domain in the recording studio and then employ a DJ to add elements like vintage turntable static to "Black Market Baby," or background gospel vocals and gamelan samples to "Eyeball Kid." The riveting blues explosion of the blustering "Filipino Box Spring Hog" has the largest and most clamorous arrangement on the album, consisting of drums, percussion, bass, guitars, trumpet, harmonica, "boners," programming, turntables, and Tom Waits' vivacious stalwart bark. "Come On Up To The House" also has a full-bodied orchestration comprised of drums, bass, guitar, piano, alto and baritone saxophones, and harmonica. This song is a soulful invitation to the wanderers, the strangers, and all the misfit characters that inhabit Tom Waits' lyrics and closes *Mule Variations* with a feeling of optimism and the comfortable restoration of a terribly wizened humanity.

Production quality has always been a concern for Tom Waits in regards to his music. For the majority of his earlier albums, Waits recorded directly to analog two-track with no

overdubbing in order to capture the aural quality of a live performance. As well, Waits wished to distance himself and his albums from the extensive and laborious studio production work that was characteristic of recordings produced in Los Angeles at that time. As an example of this desire, *Nighthawks at the Diner* was actually recorded live before a studio audience, giving this album a very intimate and authentic performance quality. With Waits' experimentation on *Swordfishtrombones* to the present, his songs have become individually developing entities that are quite distinct from each other, no longer the completely formed, shrink-wrapped packages that were once taken into the studio. This change in Waits composition process is particularly visible in his later works from *Rain Dogs* onwards, where his songs are conceived, composed, manipulated, honed, torn up, stripped down, and pasted back together asymmetrically, no longer a simple assemblage of chords and words. *Bone Machine* and *The Black Rider* furthered his attention to sound detail, as well as the tactile and concrete quality of performance and production qualities that surfaced during the making of *Swordfishtrombones*, *Rain Dogs*, and *Frank's Wild Years*. This progression of Waits' production and compositional styles caused the characters and scenes of his songs to become even more deeply embedded into the actual realms of the recordings themselves, a process which functioned to shape and influence their development. Tom Waits has never looked for musical quality to be enhanced by technique or technology, but instead values his converted chicken ranch recording studio, junkyard orchestrations, 'real' room sounds, and unplannable accidents (rooster crows being caught on an outdoor recording, squeaky piano benches, metal chairs sliding on a cement floor). On the songs "Picture in a Frame" and "Take it With Me" (*Mule Variations*) the piano pedals creak throughout, which only adds to the emotional truth, communicative potential, and realistic aesthetic of the pieces.

From *The Early Years* to *Mule Variations*, the characters and narrative have always influenced and been an important factor in Tom Waits' choices of musical style, sound, and

instrumentation. His lyrical style allows his songs and characters to range from being literal to strangely surreal and symbolic, and from dealing with harsh realities to fantastical aberrations of the subconscious, with equal facility and virtuosity. Musically, for Tom Waits, this process was reflected in his increasing experimentation and innovation with varied instrumentation, recording techniques, and textures, which resulted in sounds that were personally indicative of the characters and stories contained within his songs.

iii. A VOICE FROM THE GUTTER

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature about Tom Waits' music is his voice: impossibly deep, tobacco stained and marinated in whiskey. Amid all the obscure instruments and astounding arrangements conjured up by Tom Waits, nothing is as remarkable as his voice which can tirelessly leap from suturing a tender love song to maniacal howling and screaming. The vocal qualities that other artists would perhaps dismiss as ruined sounds or terrible mistakes, coalesce into beautifully misshapened forms which provide the foundations for Tom Waits' vocal language. His trademark gravel growl from his earlier albums developed over the years into a much more flexible instrument that he manipulated and specifically tailored to suit each individual song, character, or emotion. Always unmistakably his own, Tom Waits pushes his voice to its extremes and makes the ordinary extraordinary, as he does with his characters and narratives. However, even more intriguing and distinctive than his vocal qualities is his highly cultivated narrative voice, which allows him to masterfully and convincingly assume a vast plethora of character roles throughout his music. His voice encapsulates and conveys simultaneously a deep human and inhuman expanse of emotion and reaches out to a general human condition.

The voice is often very distinctive and unique to an individual, and as a musician, Tom Waits is very protective of his voice and what it is used to represent and therefore,

continually battles to keep himself and his music disassociated from the advertising industry. Part of the image that Tom Waits has cultivated over the years includes an explicit aversion to product endorsement and he is outwardly disdainful of musicians who allow their music to be used as advertising jingles. Comparing himself to others who do allow advertisers to make use of their music, Waits sarcastically remarks:

> It's amazing, when I look at these artists. I find it unbelievable that they finally broke into the fascinating and lucrative world of advertising after years on the road, making albums and living in crummy apartments; finally advertising opened up and gave them a chance to do what they really wanted to do, which was salute and support a major American product, and have that name blinking over their head as they sing. I think it's wonderful what advertising has done, giving them these opportunities to be spokesmen for Chevrolet, Pepsi, etc. (Rowland 1987, 88)

Though established performers may defend corporate sponsorship as a necessary means of offsetting expensive touring costs and enabling them to keep their tickets prices down, Tom Waits still sees accepting that kind of money as an undignified sacrifice of his independence and adamantly refuses to allow his image or music to be used to bolster a product's sales. When the Dallas based advertising agency Tracy-Locke and a Denton musician named Stephen Carter appropriated the image and sound of Waits for a "SalsaRio Doritos" advertising campaign in 1988, he was infuriated and filed a suit against Frito-Lay for voice misappropriation and false endorsement. As Simon Frith indicates in *Performing Rites*,

> Even when treating the voice as an instrument, in short, we come up against the fact that it stands for the person more directly than any other musical device. Expression with the voice is taken to be more direct than expression on guitar or drum set, more revealing – which is why when drums and guitars are heard as directly expressive they are then heard as 'voices.' And this argument has legal sanction. Lawyers in cases of musical theft assume that a voice is a personal property, that it can be 'stolen' in a way that other instrumental noises cannot (James Brown's vocal swoop is recognizably his immediately; a guitarist has to prove that a melodic riff, a composition rather than a sound, is unique). The most interesting legal rulings in this context concern soundalikes, cases in which the voices used ('Bette Midler,' 'Tom Waits') weren't actually theirs, and yet because they were recognizably 'the same' could nevertheless be adjudged to invade the stars' 'privacy,' to steal their 'personality.' To recognize a voice, the courts ruled, is to recognize a person. (Frith 1996, 191)

For Tom Waits this meant winning his case in court, being awarded $2.5 million dollars in damages, and gaining financial independence.

Tom Waits uses the extremes of his vocal quality from a guttural growl and bark, to a strained melodic sweetness, to the screaming of a freakish high falsetto. These vocal qualities, which have the potential to sound unnatural and degenerate when used by other contemporary rock or pop singers, find a perfectly natural place in the character and style of Tom Waits. Similar to the pleasingly bad vocal qualities used by singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan and Neil Young to convey political messages, Tom Waits uses his voice as a tool to communicate his stories, rather than as a means to showcase himself as a singer. When questioned by *Musician* magazine whether he was concerned at the beginning of his career that his voice did not have the qualities of a classic singer, Tom Waits scoffed and replied, "In terms of what was going on at the time? 'Are you gonna fit in? Are you gonna be the only guy at the party with your shirt on inside out?' I was never embarrassed, but I'm liking it more now. Learning how to make it do different things" (Rowland 1987, 88). By challenging the idea of culturally accepted "natural" voices and possessing a blatant disregard for pop music ideals, Tom Waits has taken vocal performance to a new level, exploring the notion of an embodied voice which signifies a person and is truly given an identity and individuality. Tom Waits' voice has changed and developed over the years, along with his persona and musical styles, and therefore, as Simon Frith indicates,

> The voice, in short, may or may not be a key to someone's identity, but it is certainly a key to the ways in which we change identities, pretend to be something we're not, deceive people, lie. We use the voice, that is, not just to assess a person, but also, even more systematically, to assess that person's sincerity: the voice and how it is used (as well as words and how they are used) become a measure of someone's truthfulness. (1996, 197)

Due to his ravaged chords, Tom Waits comes across as being sincere just because of the fact that all of his lyrics receive the abusive treatment of his voice, and listeners must look beyond pretty fronts in order to find the absorptive beauty of his music and lyrics.

Tom Waits' voice is integral to the development and theatrical presentation of his characters. By having a transmutable voice ravaged by the abuses of alcohol and cigarettes, his voice carries an element of authenticity and intimacy to his lyrics. As listeners, we feel we can trust that he has been a part of his stories, that he is one of these characters or knows them intimately himself, and such personal disclosures and poignant parables may not be portrayed with the same impact by a golden throated crooner. As Tom Waits' voice deteriorated, or improved, depending upon your view, over the years due to the irreparable damage inflicted upon it, the voice of his characters transformed as well. He was no longer exclusively the drunk in a bar hunched over the piano, telling his jazzy tales of woe, misfortune, and loss, but became a vociferous world traveller barking, bellowing, and whooping out his stories from street corners, train stations, and circus tents for those who cared to listen. Zygmunt Bauman proposes that while the "*modern* 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open" (1996, 18). For Waits, his early years involved the establishment and maintenance of a very real, definitive, and unwavering persona. Throughout the course of his career, he abandoned this modernist concept of identity construction, and like Bauman suggests, adopted a postmodern model of identity construction, recycling, abandoning, discovering, manipulating, and superimposing many different personas in his personal life, performances, lyrics, and musical styles.

Tom Waits' music and complex persona has the possibility to function on many different levels, like the title *Swordfishtrombones*, which demarcates both elevation and elongation, and inevitably the questions arise: What is being heard, the voice of Tom Waits

or a character voice or persona that he has constructed for his narrative? Who is speaking, Tom Waits as a person, his identity as a composer, his performance persona, his fabricated character, his own or his character's conscience, or the personality the listener has formulated for Waits' from a music interview published last week? The very concept of the modern invention of identity acknowledges that it "could exist only as a problem; it was a problem, and thus ready to be born, precisely because of that experience of under-determination and free-floatingness which came to be articulated *ex post facto* as 'disembeddedment' (Bauman 1996, 19). Tom Waits reconciled this dilemma by moving beyond his identity as a drunk to establish a rich and often unclassifiable repertoire of personas, as well as maintaining a sense of intimacy between his voice and the lives and events of his characters. Simon Frith acknowledges the existence of this complexity of voice and identity in that

> there is, first of all, the character presented as the protagonist of the song, its singer and narrator, the implied person controlling the plot, with an attitude and tone of voice; but there may also be a 'quoted' character, the person whom the song is about (and singers, like lecturers have their own mannered ways of indicating quote marks). On top of this there is the character of the singer as star, what we know about them, or are lead to believe about them through their packaging and publicity, and then, further, an understanding of the singer as a person, what we like to imagine they are really like, what is revealed, *in the end*, by their voice. (1996, 198-99)

This notion of voice complexity is essential to Tom Waits as a singer, musician, composer, storyteller, and person. Tom Waits' personality reverberates throughout all of his songs, characters, and stories, so that each one is of his own authorial voice. When questioned in an interview about the control of voice, as in the ability to communicate, Tom Waits replied,

> You always have to work on your voice. Once you feel as though you have one, whatever you tackle will come under the spell of what you are trying to do. You want to be able to make turns and fly upside down – but not by mistake. You want it to be a conscious decision, and to do it well. You don't want somebody to say, 'Well, he went for the bank there and lost control and he went right into the mountain and thirty-seven people died.' You want 'em to say, 'Well, he decided to take his hands off the controls and sacrifice the entire plane and its passengers. And I must say it was a spectacular flight. The explosion set off sparks that could be seen all the

> way to Oxnard. Remarkable.' I think you have to work on yourself more than you work on the music. Then whatever you're aiming at you'll be able to hit between the eyes. (Rowland 1987, 84)

Tom Waits' scabrous, guttural growl explicitly reveals the ravages of a real life and the existence of real suffering, such experiences that extend beyond the end of a microphone and a spotlight. Tom Waits is a commendable showman and performer, adding another dimension to his authorial voice, which must include elements of "Tom Waits the performer" in addition to the layers of voices already present. He admitted in an interview that,

> In some way, acting and working in films has helped me in terms of being able to write and record and play different characters in songs without feeling like it compromises my own personality or whatever. That I can be different things in the studio, that I can separate myself from the song. Before, I felt like this song is me, and I have to be in the song. I'm trying to get away from feeling that way, and to let the songs have their own anatomy; their own itinerary; their own outfits. (Fried 1987)

Tom Waits recognized that he did not have to live out his persona on every level and that this persona did not have to infiltrate all aspects of his music and performances. His voice no longer exclusively represented the drunken persona associated with Tom Waits, but became a deeper extension of himself as a singer, delving into the lives, experiences, and dreams of numerous strange and diverse characters. He no longer focused upon assembling a singular identity but fell into the "hub of postmodern life strategy" which involved the rejection of identity building, and focused upon not being defined and restricted by such formulaic constructions (Bauman 1996, 24). Tom Waits discovered the possibilities embodied in narrative separation and distance, and in masquerade, with idea that the undisguised self possessed the potential to both rest quietly beneath a seamless veneer or to erupt through the cracks. His voice became a device through which his characters found a narrative voice and means of expression; his voice came to represent freedom and the possibility of wider bands of communication rather than confining him to an articulation defined by a particular real or fabricated persona or character.

III. TOM VARIATIONS: HIS MANY CHARACTERS

Throughout Tom Waits' musical career, he has gathered an interesting assortment of characters in his songs; he catalogues the lost dreams and disappearing consolations of life from the doorway of a dive, a five-and-dime, a greasy diner, or a rundown tattoo parlour with a gallery of pimps, prostitutes, waitresses, drunks, and hobos, across the street from a bus or train station. He explains,

> I've always loved songs of adventure, murder ballads, songs about shipwrecks and terrible acts of depravity and heroism. Erotic tales of seductions, songs of romance, wild courage, and mystery. Everyone has tried at one time or another to live inside a song. Songs where people die for love. Songs of people on the run. Songs of ghost ships or bank robberies. I've always wanted to live inside songs and never come back. Songs that are recipes for superstition or unexplained disappearances. (Waits 1993)

Tom Waits exposes the desperation and disillusionment which festers beneath the plastic coated façade of life in America, where heightened visions of prosperity and happiness eventually fall subservient to a prosaic reality. His songs reek of cluttered Americana, Tin Pan Alley, harrowing blues, wheezy polkas, crippled funeral marches, showcase ballads, crumpled dollar bills, hookers in torn fishnet stockings, deserted train stations, eggs chasing the bacon in the frying pan, and everything beautifully sad.

Throughout Tom Waits' music the pervasive theme is the topos of the wanderer. His characters all roam, in some way, throughout the world, dreaming and escaping: they are moving from one point in their lives to another, or going through pivotal changes. Like Bauman's pilgrims, Waits' wanderers are shown to feel that "the truth is elsewhere; the true place is always some distance, some time away" and that the "distance between the true world and this world here and now is made of the mismatch between what is to be achieved and what has been" (1996, 20). They are all transmutable, metamorphosing, living in unstable or unknown places, without knowing where their next meal will come from or where home is. Some of his characters are not wanderers in the physical sense of travelling

from place to place, but are emotional wanderers on personal journeys searching for happiness within themselves and with their interactions with others. Other characters may not actually be wanderers themselves, they may be their abandoned girlfriends, stifled husbands, devastated parents, or casual acquaintances, but their lives are affected and forever impressed upon by their relationships and contacts with these wanderer characters.

Tom Waits' characters are all linked to travel, whether they are constantly moving around like sailors, soldiers, and circus acts, or are vagabonds on the street who call this doorway home for the night, or the heartbroken diner waitresses who can only dream of adventure. Tom Waits' protagonists are the dregs of society, forgotten misfits overflowing with stories of the sights they have seen, the stories they are living, and the stories they are dreaming. For the wanderer, ideas of home, family, and security are generally nebulous, often a source of longing and nostalgia, and for many of his characters, they are still dreams after a lifetime of wandering and escape.

The juxtaposition of vastly different places and people finds a very natural place in Tom Waits' lyrics, as well as in the very inventive instrumentation and found instruments he employs. He reveals the bitter underbelly of the world in which we live, and he looks compassionately at the derelicts of society, elevating them to a higher level within his songs. Tom Waits is seduced by tarnish rather than tinsel and is capable of finding more beauty from a gutter than most people would find on top of a rainbow. With his love of dime store kitsch, fascination and repulsion with American pop culture, and morbid pathos, Tom Waits is the bohemian's boho, a willing and consummate surrogate for vagabond dreamers.

i. NIGHTHAWKS AND TIRE TRAMPS

Throughout his life, Jack Kerouac's Beat classic, *On The Road*, served as an important thematic touchstone for Waits. In particular, the lifestyles of Kerouac's characters,

the rubber tramps that lived from gas tank to gas tank and from town to town, and his particular use of language provided Waits with a framework for his own characters and language. Highways are symbolic of many different freedoms and liberations for every individual who encounters them, whether as spirit-revitalizing journeys or a necessary escape from mercilessly fatiguing constraints. For these wanderers, "only the streets make sense, not the houses – houses tempt one to rest and relax, to forget about the destination" and they live their lives comfortable in their homelessness (Bauman 1996, 20). Highways are highly conducive to the spirit of wanderers and vagabonds, and are often places that lonely souls can be brought together for brief moments of interaction, or crowded minds can be given the space they require to refocus and meditate. Highways are places of movement, they are designed only to facilitate travel from one place to the next and thus offer endless possibilities to the wanderer. With the transitory nature of highway travel, people and their lives can radically transmute with the movement from one place to the next, tearing open a sinuous chasm in a world of possibilities with a destination anywhere.

Tom Waits pays tribute to Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady in his song "Jack & Neal: California Here I Come" from *Foreign Affairs* which tells the tale of a wild road trip to California. Looking for stories and adventure, the characters head out on the road with Jack "sittin poker faced with bullets backed with bitches / Neal hunched at the wheel puttin everyone in stitches." The image of a big American gas guzzler roaring down the highway with its passengers exploiting life, such as when one of the adventurers "dropped her drawers and / stuck her fat ass half way out the window" and "shouted get a load of this and gave the finger to the moon," is sharply contrasted with the desolate picture of this lonely highway observed in the lyrics, "the gas pumps looked like tombstones from here / felt lonelier than a parking lot when the last car pulls away." The hopes and excitement the road to California promised were intensified when they "saw a fallin' star" and "somehow you could just tell

we'd be in California soon." These characters exhibit the freedom, lack of inhibitions, and thrills associated with road trips as they head out on an active quest for stimulation and chaos.

An important "traveller" convention is the truck driver. In "Nighthawk Postcards" (*Nighthawks at the Diner*), Tom Waits depicts the hazardous life of truck drivers where frequently "they're hiballin' with bankrupt brakes, over driven, / underpaid, over fed, a day late and a dollar short." For most truck drivers, home becomes a flat place at the side of the road or a parking lot somewhere. "Semi Suite" (*The Heart of Saturday Night*) highlights the difficulties encountered in maintaining a relationship with a trucker. This story is depicted from the perspective of his wife who hates "those diesels rollin' / And those Friday nights out bowlin' / When he's off for a twelve hour lay over night" and wishes she "had a dollar / For every time he hollered / That he's leavin' / And he's never coming back" as he heads back out on the road. She desperately yearns for more, but feels powerless to forsake this lifestyle she knows or to change the course of her life. Instead, she surrenders herself to the anguish of a "twelve hour lay over" man as she lies through her pain and frustration, telling him that "he's [her] man" simply because she does not have the courage to accept the truth of her situation and leave. In contrast to exploring "the land of self-creation" and freedom found on the road, this woman feels caught in a place where the "horizon was tightly packed with huts, barns, copses, groves and church towers. Here, wherever one moved, one was *in a place*, and being in place meant staying put, doing what the place needed to be done" (Bauman 1996, 20). This woman is bound to and defined by a single place that encompasses her entire being and determines her actions. Her husband, as a road wanderer, is not defined by a particular place, but can perpetually renew his identity as different surroundings and people materialize around him on his travels. She feels ensnared and embittered when he tells her that she is always on his mind or that she is the only one who will ever be able to understand "his

complicated soul" and deeply resents his incessant desertion of her for the road, suffocating while he goes to "the only place a man can breathe / And collect his thoughts." He distances himself from the mundane and the disturbances of family life as he finds comfort in the anonymity of the highway. She finds her life passing by as she has "packed and unpacked / So many times [she's] lost track" following him around. Loving and waiting for a "truck driving man / Stoppin' when he can" is asphyxiating her own happiness while he is "flyin' away on the road" and she has resigned to the fact that when she hears his engines pulling up to the house, she will be forevermore "looking through the window in the kitchen" knowing that she is "always gonna be there when he calls."

The road rambler in "Diamonds on my Windshield" (*The Heart of Saturday Night*) escaped the drone of a congested city late one rainy night for a highway drive, as "freeway flying, it always makes [him] sing," and he pulls "into town on the Interstate" with "Diamonds on [his] windshield / and these tears from heaven." This song gives an account of the sights and sounds encountered on a late night freeway drive such as a drenched hitchhiker who must be "wishing he was home in a Wisconsin bed," and the competition between drivers who are "pulling up fast on the right" and "jockey for the fast lane." The "metropolitan area with interchange and connections" provides distraction from other worries as "the broken line's on [his] mind" and he finds temporary seclusion from the grind of his life. Similar to the experiences of truckers, the road provides an introspective space for drivers to gather their thoughts and once the radio's gone off the air, the forced silence allows for time to think. Like Edmond Jabès notion that "you do not go to the desert to find identity, but to lose it, to lose your personality, to become anonymous…And then something extraordinary happens: you hear silence speak," this highway driver allows himself to become distanced from the boundaries and problematics of existence in a dense cityscape

(Bauman 1996, 20). Rejuvenated after a night of "blazing through this midnight jungle," he heads for home and "the engine talks / Whispers home at last."

The highway tragedy of "Burma Shave" (*Foreign Affairs*) opens with severe images of the small dying town of Marysville with the "scar on its belly," as seen from the car window of a juvenile delinquent who was just "a stranger passing through." At the side of the road he stops for a young girl who is hitchhiking and inquires "how far are you going he said that depends on what you mean / he says I'm only stopping here to get some gasoline / I guess I'm going thataway just as long as it's paved / I guess you could say I'm on my way to Burma Shave." After their initial meeting it is established that both characters are wanderers on a rebellious journey and have turned to the road seeking their dreams and aspirations. They are both looking for emancipation from the complexities of life in the mythical Burma Shave, whose signs that directed them down the highway were actually clever advertisements for an American brand of shaving cream. The young girl "took out her barrettes and her hair spilled out like rootbeer / and she popped her gum and arched her back" as she enlightened the stranger sitting next to her about her reasons for leaving the small town of Marysville, which to her "ain't nothing but a wide spot in the road" where everyone has one foot in the grave. For the girl, Burma Shave is a dream contrasted to the cruel reality of Marysville where she cannot bear "the sting of going to bed with every dream that dies here every morning." For the outlaw driver who is "jumping [his] parole just like a fugitive tonight," Burma Shave presents itself as an intoxicating haven, and a place where he can be unbound from his past transgressions. The elation of escape runs rampant as they count the grain elevators disappearing behind them in the rear view mirror. The celebratory images of chasing dreams down the road to Burma Shave are underscored by the usual highway dangers of drinking and speeding, where a fatal challenge is both made and met in the lyrics "why don't you have another swig / and pass that car if you are so brave." Inevitably, the

road which led to liberation had a "spider web crack" which resulted in "a nickel's worth of dreams and every wishbone that they saved" being swindled from them on their way to Burma Shave as "the mustang screamed" and they became irreversibly entangled in the twisted machine. With the last line of this song, "they say that dreams are growing wild just this side of Burma Shave," Tom Waits reinforces the fact that just as the road to Burma Shave is laden with dreams and hopes, reality can still pass on the driver's side.

ii. RAIN DOGS

Tom Waits transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary and gives his itinerant and renegade characters a venerable quality. He is essentially a patron saint of the losers and the underdogs, all those people who believe deliverance and salvation can be found in a bottle of bourbon or in a rusty tin can. Tom Waits observes and represents those characters who have been rejected by a society which demands a certain brand of success and shuns failure. Rain dogs are the characters who cannot be constrained and are determined "Not to get tied to the place. Not to wed one's life to one vocation only. Not to swear consistency and loyalty to anything and anybody. Not to *control* the future, but to *refuse to mortgage* it: to take care that the consequences of the game do not outlive the game itself, and to renounce responsibility for such as do" (Bauman 1996, 24). Waits' vagabonds live in the present, unbound by the dictates of time, place, trajectory, or legislation. Independent and autonomous, these characters are often seen as threats to societal order since they have no itinerary, no set destination, and no place of belonging. In modern society, vagabond inclinations are increasing, as places of belonging and settled places are declining in a rapidly advancing society unwilling to commit to earlier ideals of security or permanence.

The portrayal of lowlife malaise is found in the lyrical sobriety of much of Tom Waits' music. Tom Waits named his vagabonds "rain dogs" after the phenomenon he

experienced while living in Lower Manhattan, where after rainstorms, "the rain washes memories from the sidewalks" ("Red Shoes by the Drugstore") and all the touchstones and territorial markings left by the dogs are erased, leaving them lost, perplexed, and unable to find their way back home. These are the stranded characters, those lost and confused, whom Tom Waits gathers in his arms and carefully listens to their tales of woe. The places where these characters once found comfort no longer exist or cannot be found, and now their lives are pieced together bit by bit, fuelled by frustration and unpredictability. In the context of Tom Waits' songs, rain dogs are also the disorderly people who never pay taxes, who do not wear underwear, much less suits, and head out on the road in search of inspiration. The song "Rain Dogs" (*Rain Dogs*) captures the spirit of these drifters who huddle together in a doorway, passing around the rum which "pours strong and thin," as they find comfort in one another aboard this "shipwreck train." Vanquished together, they proclaim, "Oh, how we danced and we swallowed the night / For it was all ripe for dreaming / Oh, how we danced away / All of the lights / We've always been out of our minds," even with the dour realization that they'll "never be going back home" now that their trail has been forever erased by the unforgiving rain. These vagabonds find themselves wandering throughout their lives "not because of the reluctance or difficulty of settling down, but because of the scarcity of settled places" and have grown to cherish this sense of displacement which they recognize in each other.

The stoic march "Underground" (*Swordfishtrombones*) reveals the unseen realm of vagabond life that exists in the underbelly of cities in the sewer systems and steam tunnels. Unbeknownst to the people who tread above them, these poverty stricken tramps "are marching around / down under your boots" and "they're alive, they're awake / while the rest of the world is asleep / below the mine shaft roads / it will all unfold / there's a world going on / UNDERGROUND." These people who live in this "big dark town" wander through the

basement of cities where "the roots hang down" and they "swing from town to town," and escape the caustic world above ground by retreating to their Cimmerian abode. These wanderers do not even infiltrate the orderly world in which society exists and functions, they occupy a space in which they are lost or forgotten, and will only encounter other vagabonds caught in a similar life journey.

In "Small Change" (*Small Change*), a murdered transient in New York becomes just a statistic in the night since everyone seems to be immune to and unaffected by violent deaths, as "nobody flinched down by the arcade / and the marquise weren't weeping / they went stark ravin' mad." Everyone is simply inconvenienced rather than aggrieved by the death of this city street wanderer, as "nobody's gone over to close his eyes" and "the newsmen start to rattle" while "the cops are tellin' jokes / about some whore house in Seattle." Tom Waits builds a personality and humanism to accompany the body laying on the sidewalk on 42nd Street with details like "there's a racing form in his pocket / circled Blue Boots in the 3rd." The vagabond is expounded as a real person with hopes and dreams who was just trying to get through the day, except that unfortunately on this day, "small change got rained on with his own .38 / and his headstone's / a gumball machine." The deplorable vulturism and opportunism of people is illustrated when "someone copped his watch fob / and someone got his ring / and the newsboy got his pork pie Stetson hat" and small change is left with nothing but a pool of his own blood that is quickly hosed down the gutter.

Set on Fifth Street in downtown Los Angeles, "On the Nickel" (*Heartattack and Vine*) is a lugubrious reminder that no matter how far down someone falls or for how long they have been caught on skid row, everyone began life somewhere as some mother's child, a mother who wonders "what becomes of all the little boys, who never comb their hair / well they're lined up all around the block, on the nickel over there." This song is dedicated to all the homeless downtrodden vagabonds caught in a place "where a royal flush can never beat a

pair," and who were once the confident individuals who had confidently run away from home only to realize that "the world just keeps getting' bigger, once you get out on your own," meanwhile having lost everything they ever owned or knew.

Including these destitute characters living on the nickel, everyone has experienced or at least knows where the "lowside of the road" can be found. The lowside of the road is many things, perhaps literally a ditch, the place you get stuck making that U-turn, the place you roll to when you are forced off the road, but it also denotes the lowest point of desperation in any human condition. In the primal blues of "Lowside of the Road" (*Mule Variations*), there is no place further down to fall than "on a black elevator / goin' down." The characters are forsaken by a baffling world where "the dice is laughin' at the man that he throwed," "the clapper has been ripped / out of the bell," and "the horse whips the / man that he rode." As every obstacle these characters try to overcome rises up against them, they find themselves "rollin' over to the lowside of the road." The slow blues saunter of this song relates the true desperation of the lowside of the road where the ground groans as loudly as the broken souls who fall down upon it.

"Anywhere I Lay My Head" (*Rain Dogs*) is the powerful attestation of one vagabond who has been everywhere, seen everything, and "don't need anybody / Because [he] learned to be alone." He is a lonely, desperate traveller whose "head is spinning round" and "heart is in [his] shoes" and for this wayfarer, life necessitates that anywhere he lays his head, he will call his home. He has spent his life as a venturesome hobo who "went and set the Thames on fire," but now realizes that he "must come back down" and confront life rather than continue to search for escape. This song is his tarnished affirmation of the choices he has made, now that he is aware of what he has left behind. The once unfettered vagabond feels the world "laughin' in her sleeve" at his lowly position in life and as the "wind is blowing cold," his regrets and disappointment surface. In a similar manner, "That Feel" (*Bone Machine*) is also

a powerful attestation of individuality and the strength of this essential human essence. This feeling of personal freedom and autonomy incites Tom Waits' vagabonds and wanderers to stay true to themselves, run away to experience the world, escape a stifling non-existence, and follow "that feel" wherever it may guide them.

iii. THE PIANIST HAS BEEN DRINKING

The character of the drunken barfly engulfed Tom Waits' onstage persona and invaded his life offstage, causing him to fall victim to the cult of self-myth. Drinking simply percolates issues of escapism, offering temporary solutions to overwhelming problems. For Tom Waits and his dishevelled characters, their stories become dangerously similar as for all, alcohol stands as an unsuccessful substitute for freedom, intimacy, and courage. Waits' drunks can also be viewed as vagabonds and wanderers whose only destinations are the blurred landscapes of bars and taverns.

The drunken piano player in "The Piano Has Been Drinking (Not Me)" (*Small Change*) is surrounded by nonsensical images and situations that he imagines such as "the juke box has to take a leak / and the carpet needs a haircut / and the spotlight looks like a prison break / cause the telephone is out of cigarettes / and the balcony's on the make." For this character, his wandering occurs in the midst of an alcoholic haze where his world and the people that fill it suddenly become much more interesting, or at least strangely exaggerated, like the Sumo wrestler bouncer, the lightman who is blind in one eye and cannot see out of the other, and the piano tuner who has a hearing aide and showed up with his mother. This song's musical importance lies the fact that, for most of Tom Waits' drinking songs, the piano is the primary accompaniment for the inebriated testimonials of rambling, hoboesque piano players who head from bar to bar playing for drinks. For Tom Waits, "The Piano Has Been Drinking (Not Me)" is perhaps as jokingly autobiographical as he got, since at the time

of *Small Change* he was still avidly cultivating his 'slumped in the gutter with a bottle of whiskey and book of poetry' image for audiences, interviewers, and even himself. Many of Tom Waits' drinking songs emanate from his earlier years, when he was fully absorbed in his barroom jazz poet image that included his gnarled posture, stuck together clothes, three day stubble, and his finger-snapping, head hanging, chain-smoking delivery from the bench of a piano in the back of a bar.

The desperation of an alcoholic to find his next drink and somebody to listen to his woes is captured in the song "Virginia Avenue" (*Closing Time*), where the character is "walking on down Virginia Avenue / trying to find somebody to tell [his] troubles to." This dipsomaniac is frustrated because "the bars are all closing, 'cause it's a quarter to two," and is idiosyncratic of many of Tom Waits' drunks whom you can imagine stumbling from bar to bar as they close down for the night and then waiting outside for when they open again the next day. This individual is a wanderer in that he has no place to call home, he lives from bar to bar, and turns to alcohol for escape from "the crazy lizards inside of [his] brain." This vagabond drunk also dreams that "there's got to be someplace that's better than this" and instinctively jumps on a "Greyhound bus" every time his depression and chagrin becomes unendurable or he is confronted with the formidable task of contending with the people he has left behind who "are catching up with [him]." For this character, eventually drinking remains the only reliable anaesthetic left once the bus tickets have run dry.

Drinking to forget is a common theme found in the piano bar songs of Tom Waits, with an example being "Warm Beer and Cold Women" (*Nighthawks at the Diner*) where a man is wandering from bar to bar. Feeling out of place in "every joint [he] stumbled into tonight," this wanderer is looking for a meaningful interaction with someone who will listen to his dilemmas. Instead he finds himself meeting "all these double knit strangers with / gin and vermouth and recycled stories / in the naugahyde booths" repeatedly reliving the same

experiences everywhere he takes himself. Surrounded by "platinum blondes and tobacco brunettes" he is "drinkin' to forget" and is feeling lost and alone in the crowded room of the "last ditch attempt saloon." The only thing he can hope for is to "get down to drinking" in order to numb his heartache and carry him to somewhere more promising. A man in the song "Muriel" (*Foreign Affairs*) has also resorted to whiskey to escape the haunting memory of a girl who follows him wherever he goes, even after he has unsuccessfully left town countless times trying to find a place where she would not be. For him, without Muriel it seems as if "all the clubs closed down" and "there's one more burned out lamppost on main street down where [they] used to stroll." With the pressure of this failed relationship, he keeps wandering to "the next whiskey bar" and buys "another cheap cigar," continuing to see her apparition every night. By doing this, his rational conduct is guided by a succession of small daily occurrences controlled by the past trauma of losing Muriel. Alcohol temporarily cuts "the present off at both ends, to sever the present from history, to abolish time in any other form but a flat collection or an arbitrary sequence of present moments" and allows this character to find a moment of comfort in this fragmented obscurity (Bauman 1996, 24). This concept of a continual present is a powerful motivator for all of Waits' wanderers who want to live life without consequence or commitment and escape complicated emotions.

For some of Tom Waits characters, like those found in "Putnam County" (*Nighthawks at the Diner*), who are unable to flee or wander away from their predicaments and stale situations, bars provide a haven from the everyday domestic and familial responsibilities like, "toilet's runnin' shake the handle / telephone's ringing its Mrs. Randal / where the hell are my goddamn sandals / and the porcelain poodles and the glass swans / staring down from the knick-knack shelf / with the parent permission slips for the kids' field trips." Instead of heading straight home after work, "the men" of Putnam County all gather at the local tavern which is "swollen until the naked eye of 2 a.m." when the waitresses begin

putting the chairs on the tables. Avoiding their obligations awaiting them at home, the men find pleasurable liberation in drinking, flirting with the girls with "the coiffed brunette curls over Maybelline eyes / wearing Prince Machiavelli, Estee Lauder" and "lyin' about their lives and the places that they'd been." Nights of drinking, boasting about "being able to get more ass than a toilet seat," asserting their masculinity as "they stomped their feet," and making up stories of their past adventures is important for these men who need to at least take their minds on a journey where, in reality, such opportunities for dream chasing are virtually non-existent. Drinking is a way of bringing the world they cannot explore to them, essentially "leaving home without becoming homeless" (Bauman 1996, 21). The drudgery of working class life for the men in this small town is endured through the cheer of booze and "talkin shop about money to loan / and palaminos and strawberry roans" with their neighbours in "the little joint winking in the dark warm narcotic American night / beneath a pin cushion sky."

iv. BLACK MARKET BABIES

Subject to the common Hollywood malaise, Tom Waits takes an interest in the darker side of the streets, the wounded American psyche, and the women with blonde hair, dark eyes, and red lips, who hope to be movie stars and never make it. He embraces the women with the broken dreams, wearing torn fishnets and red high heels, and shows the desperation in the choices they have made and the trepidation from which they flee in his compassionate narratives. Where the streets and highways provide freedom, comfort, and endless possibility for some characters, for others the streets "may prove to be obstacles rather than help, obstacles rather than thoroughfares. They may misguide, divert from the straight path, lead astray" (Bauman 1996, 20). Waits' streetwalkers chase after glamorous dreams or try to escape mundane quotidianity but find that the places where they had hoped their dreams

awaited them to be largely unwelcoming and hostile. Rather than gaining stability, new opportunities, and strong identities, the identities that these characters repeatedly try to build disintegrate as their attempts to realize their dreams fail and they are forced to live from one moment to the next. These women turn to prostitution out of desperation, as a means of survival when their dreams have failed them and they have no place to call home but a dingy hotel room or a lonely street corner.

The diversion and escape strippers provide for lonely voyeurs is described in "Pasties and a G-String" (*Small Change)*. Here a drunk tramp heads to the strip club with the "strip tease, prick tease / car kease blues" to take in "the porno floor show" with all the other men who are shouting out for more. The stripper is "so good, it makes / a dead man cum" and she is reduced to "cleavage cleavage thighs and hips / from the nape of her neck / to the lipstick lips / chopped and channeled / and lowered and louvered" and for the purpose of these men who will "be back tomorrow night," she is always "hot and ready / creamy and sugared" and totally submissive. The strip clubs with their promise of "hot burlesque" and "beer and a shot" offer a sanctuary of escape, complete with alcohol and visual pleasures for individuals troubled by their daily life struggles. The objectification of women and the lack of dimension attributed to their personalities gives their audience the opportunity to experience control and power in their own lives, where beyond the walls of the strip club, they may have none.

In the song, "Christmas Card from a Hooker in Minneapolis" (*Blue Valentine*), the character Charley is reading a letter from a hooker who has become pregnant and has began to straighten out her life, even claiming she "stopped takin' dope / and [she] quit drinking whiskey / and [her] old man plays trombone / and works out at the track." She draws out for Charley a picture of security and tenderness in her relationship with a man who loves her even though she is pregnant with somebody else's child and even gave her a ring "that was worn by his mother / and he takes [her] out dancin' / every saturday nite." She reminisces

affectionately about Charley and the times they spent together saying that she thinks of him every time she passes a gas station "on account of all the grease [he] used to wear in his hair." She has a history of running away from pain and after detailing her lifetime of trouble, agony, and misfortune, she tells Charley that she thinks she's happy "for the first time since [her] accident" and yearns for the things that she once took for granted in the past. She has constructed intricate delusions of what she wishes her life could be like, and through her letter to Charley, she can have these illusions and dreams materialize momentarily, if only for a page. But once the letter and her fantasy have reached an end, she realizes that she is not where she wants to be and the harsh reality of her life crashes back in, forcing her to admit, "I don't have a husband / he don't play the trombone / and I need to borrow money / to pay this lawyer / and charley, hey / I'll be eligible for parole / come valentines day." She is a wanderer without a home whose daily encounters include crime and prostitution, and whose only temporary consolation is her elaborate fabrication of a happy existence, which she invents with a pen and paper.

The story of the runaway streetwalker is found in "A Sweet Little Bullet from a Pretty Blue Gun" (*Blue Valentine*), where a "young girl / with sweet little wishes / and pretty blue dreams" is standing out in the rain "on Hollywood and Vine / by the Thrifty Mart sign" after her exodus from Nebraska which will never let her go back home. She is a wide-eyed and innocent dreamer flocking to the sacred Hollywood sign desirous of something more from life. However, she is left sadly disillusioned as Hollywood is not sympathetic towards "sweet little girls / with nothing in their jeans" as soon she feels she would "rather die before [she] wake[s] / like Marilyn Monroe" and throw her dreams out into the street where the "rain will make 'em grow," rather than face another torturous Hollywood day. This girl's tale of woe is not unlike a thousand that came before for the night clerk at the Gilbert Hotel who has "heard every hard luck story / at least a hundred times or more," and her

hopelessness perpetually augments as every day continues to "swindle a little girl out of her dreams." The precarious situations encountered by this streetwalker are exemplified in the forewarning advice to "never trust a scarecrow / wearin' shades after dark / be careful of that old bow tie he wears" and the young girl is alerted to the iniquitous and reprobate intentions of the sinister men that come out after dark. She is also warned against pretending that the shots she hears outside of her window are anything but "some fool playin' the second line / from the barrel of a pretty blue gun" as "that ain't no cherry bomb / 4th of July's all done," and dismissing the reality of the life-threatening harm facing her and all the other young girls hoping to make it in Hollywood.

In contrast to the lost innocence and shattered dreams of the "young girl with sweet little wishes," the woman in "Black Market Baby" (*Mule Variations*) has no disillusions about her life and feels no remorse or guilt for her actions as "She's whiskey in a teacup / She gives blondes a bad name / She's a Bonzai Aphrodite" and is fully in control of her chosen licentiousness. She is a hooker who, "In Moberly, Missouri at the Iroquois Hotel / She checked in with the President / and she ran up quite a Bill," and has amnesia in her kiss to keep her empowered and free from any emotional liability. There is a man "with a lantern / and he carries her soul" who has made the mistake of falling in love with this woman who is his "Black Market Baby / She's a diamond that / wants to stay coal." Even though his "eyes say their prayers to her" the sailors still ring her doorbell and "Like a moth mistakes a light bulb / For the moon and goes to hell," he struggles with the realization that his love will not be able to change her or influence her decisions. This woman is an emotional wanderer who relies on brief superficial encounters with other drifters for her living and therefore, avoids commitment in order to maintain the power and detachment she would lose in surrendering her heart to someone.

v. THE ONLY KIND OF LOVE

Annihilated relationships, shattered hearts, lonely nights, and wandering souls condition the emotional journeys of Waits' songs, providing the motivation for the impassioned actions of his characters. They are generally not fortuitous in love and are haunted by the memories of a lost love, either deeply embittered by betrayal or deception, or remorseful for the behaviour that caused the destruction of their relationships. In the pursuit of love, his characters are often left lonely in crowded rooms, forever scouring the earth for something that may never be or someone that they once held dear. Love offers escape from dejection and solitude for some characters; for others, love is a torturous ordeal to be avoided. Waits' characters exist in a postmodern world where relationships and interpersonal exchanges are superficial and fleeting, and ideals about commitment and permanence have long been abandoned. In such a chaotic state of human relations, stability is rare as "romance can no longer be equated with permanence" and "one can hardly 'hook on' an identity to relationships which themselves are irreparably 'unhooked'"(Bauman 1996, 25). Waits' characters vary from identity builders dreaming of security and longevity in their relationships, to those wanderers who seek to break down encompassing restrictions, rules, and consequences with an unquenchable desire for distance and independence.

Regrets for a love lost is poignantly displayed in the song "Martha" (*Closing Time*), where a character is reminiscing about "the days of roses, of poetry, and prose" of a young love that was passionate and impetuous where all they had was each other. At the time, "there was no tomorrows" and the mistakes or choices they made seemed inconsequential as they "packed away [their] sorrows / And [they] saved them for a rainy day." Now forty years later, when this wandering spirit is caught in a safe and lack-lustre marriage, he tracks down the phone number of this past love. He laments losing sight of her in his impulsive youth, where the need to assert his independence, repudiate commitment, and chase after dreams

overshadowed his need for a great relationship. This enterprising character required fragmentation and detachment in order to collect his innumerable life experiences. Commitment at that time in his life carried too many consequences, just as "the once-vaunted 'cultural capital' tends to turn in no time into cultural *liability*" (Bauman 1996, 25). As the years passed the thrills and passion of youth and wandering subsided, and they both settled down, filled the void of detachment, and found someone to make them feel secure. Perhaps feeling compunction for abandoning "quiet evenings trembling close to you," "old Tom Frost" can not help but wonder if this woman will remember his voice while he fights back his tears and belatedly expounds his true feelings, "Martha, Martha, I love you can't you see?"

Stalked by an old girlfriend who sends him "blue valentines" to remind him of his "cardinal sin" and to "mark the anniversary" of someone who he once was, the character in the song "Blue Valentines" (*Blue Valentine*), cannot seem to escape this woman even though he tries "to remain at large." Hounded by his past wrong-doings in this blundered relationship, his conscience does not allow him to "wash the guilt / or get these bloodstains off [his] hands." Her relentless persecution makes him feel "just like there's / a warrant out for [his] arrest" and has him always on the run, looking over his shoulder, checking in the rear-view mirror, and changing his name. Unfortunately there is no escaping the "tattooed broken promise / that [he] hide[s] beneath [his] sleeve" or the "ghost of [her] memory" that constantly follows him. He is unable to explain why he tortures himself by saving "all this madness / in the nightstand drawer / there to haunt upon [his] shoulders," when he knows that it would be much healthier to move on with a blind heart rather than inundate himself in "a lot of whiskey" and cut his "bleedin heart out every night."

The deeply cynical and embittered "Who Are You" (*Bone Machine*) depicts a character bruised by someone who has tangled him in a web of lies that he indiscriminately

believed and reveals his acrimonious sentiments towards this person for their deception. Originally he "fell in love / with [her] sailor's mouth and [her] wounded eyes" and felt compassion and attraction towards this amalgamation of apparent fragility and brazenness. Now he is simply hurt and frustrated with repeatedly taking back this girl whom he needs to ask, "And just who are you this time?" This girl is a wanderer in the sense that she lives outside the constraints or truth and honesty, every day taking on a new personality and living a new story. She disassembles her identity and commitments, not being bound by past, present, or future trials. Unable to accept her erratic and unpredictable personality, he compares her actions with the prevarication of a carny heckle on the midway, "3 shots for a dollar / Win a real live doll," and with rancour tells her to "Go on ahead take this the wrong way" expressing his resentment towards his time spent "in the jail of [her] arms." This character's scathing reproach for the girl's duplicity is blatantly asserted in the mordant lyrics: "Did you bury the carnival / With the lions and all / Excuse me while I sharpen my nails," and perhaps most sardonically, "You look rather tired / Are you pretending to love / Well I hear that it pays well." The melodramatic actions of this chameleon girl are also trenchantly criticized as he inquires, "How do your pistol and your bible and your sleeping pills go. / Are you still jumping out of windows in expensive clothes?" He is trying to avenge his lacerated heart by redirecting her malevolence as he says, "You better get down on the floor / Don't you know this is war," demanding her remorse and repentance for his suffering.

In addition to their physical wandering and vagabond lifestyles, many of Tom Waits' characters are on emotional journeys as well. As wanderers, these characters are beckoned towards new experiences, amusements, and possibilities, but Waits recognizes that such fragmented lifestyles may never coalesce comfortably into a cohesive pattern. Therefore, amid broken relationships, forlorn emotions, and maudlin ballads, Waits includes inescapably

beautiful moments of tenderness and ardent devotion in songs like " Jersey Girl" (*Heartattack and Vine*) with the lyrics, "when I'm wrapped up in my baby's arms / my little angel gives me everything, I know someday she'll wear my ring…nothing else matters in this whole wide world / when you are in love with a Jersey girl," and the penetrating "Take It with Me" (*Mule Variations*) where a character vows "In a land there's a town / and in that town there's / A house / and in that house / there's a woman / and in that woman / there's a heart I love / I'm gonna take it / with me when I go." For these vagabond wanderers who have spent their lives absconding familiarity and order, they occasionally find moments where they take comfort in being settled and belonging.

vi. SOLDIER'S THINGS AND SAILOR'S DREAMS

The very nature of the occupations of soldiers and sailors requires them to be itinerant and their lives can often be treacherous and filled with uncertainty. They encounter the dangers and beauty of ocean travel and exotic overseas destinations not ordinarily encountered by other wanderers, train hoppers, and tire tramps. Most of the sailors and soldiers in Tom Waits' music are forced on the road or overseas because of their duties, but others are compelled to this nomadic way of life because of the need to escape from an insufferable homelife, a purposeless meandering existence, or haunts from their past. The military offers security without a complicated emotional commitment and allows its recruits to gain a new identity and develop a sense of purpose or immediacy in their lives. Waits' military characters grapple with their difficult lives, one day, situation, and place, at a time while pursuing fulfilment, adventure, or in some cases, emotional freedom. Home for many of Tom Waits' sailor and soldier characters is a faded picture in a tattered wallet or for some, a place that will never be found.

The song "Johnsburg, Illinois" (*Swordfishtrombones*) evokes this kind of frayed sentimentality that often accompanies wanderers on their travels. It is a simple short love song from a sailor or soldier sitting in a bar or diner who, while talking about his girl back home, casually pulls out his wallet and shows the worn photograph to the man beside him. Far away from home, he longingly muses about his true love whom he can not live without and who occupies all of his thoughts, while softly contemplating the "place on [his] arm / where [he's] written her name" next to his own. Although this song is only one verse long, it is as meaningful and precious as the cherished photograph which possesses so much more meaning beyond its physical self.

Loneliness and yearning chaperone the hearts of soldiers called to serve in military duty far away from home. "Shore Leave" (*Swordfishtrombones*) concerns a sailor or marine who is on shore leave "trying to make it all last / squeezing all the life out / of a lousy two day pass" while walking down the street "in a Hong Kong drizzle" and missing his beloved wife back home. Certain unusual percussion and horn sounds give a feeling of exoticism, and the music, interestingly, while trying to produce an atmosphere of a wet Hong Kong street late at night, also lends itself to creating a contrasting visualization of this soldier's wife at home alone in Illinois, as he "wondered how the same moon outside / over this Chinatown fair / could look down on Illinois / and find [her] there." This soldier is a world traveller because of the nature of his military duty, but is tethered by his sentimentality and devotion to a place of security and commitment back home.

Torn between following his "body at home" or his "heart in the wind," a sailor in "Shiver Me Timbers" (*The Early Years V2*) decides that the call of the sea and the urge "to be up in the crow's nest / and singing [his] say" are irresistible and that he has to leave his family and friends and sail away. This restless soldier can not "fathom [his] stayin'" and drifts on out in search of inspiring accomplishments and thrilling adventures where "the

clouds are like headlines / on a new front page sky." He needs to travel alone and live an independent and unencumbered lifestyle so that he can "skip like a stone" wherever the "Blue water" takes him. His impulse for challenging expeditions and personal explorations takes priority in his life, even over love, as he feels that nobody knows or understands him, and he asks someone to "please call [his] missus / Tell her not to cry / 'Cause [his] goodbye is written / By the moon in the sky" as he heads out on his travels.

Disdain for suburbia and domesticity surfaces in the song "In The Neighborhood" (*Swordfishtrombones*) where mundane surroundings and trivial annoyances such as tipped over garbage cans, construction work, noisy delivery trucks, and busted windows signify the hassles of neighbourhood life. The character in this song is frustrated by the "goddamn flatbed" that has him "pinned in again" as it is idiosyncratic of the entrapment he feels towards his entire situation and existence. Everyday predictability, such as "Friday's a funeral and Saturday's a bride" is unbearable in this suburban neighbourhood where everybody's personal life is public, and everyone knows when "Big Mambo's kicking his old grey hound." In order to escape the suffocating chokehold of domesticity and complacency, "Butch joined the army" in order to free himself and experience the world from a new perspective.

"Cold Cold Ground" (*Frank's Wild Years*) begins with a scene in an old café abroad somewhere where a couple of soldiers are sitting together. One is a quite young recruit who "never slept with a dream before he had to go away." Back home "Uncle Ray bought a round" to subdue everyone's concern and worry for "the army in the cold cold ground" and to help them focus on living their own lives. This song looks at the empty voids that soldiers leave behind at home and the sometimes cruel sentimentality that is exchanged in order to conceal emotional weakness and vulnerability, as exemplified in the lyrics, "now don't be a cry baby / when there's wood in the shed / there's a bird in the chimney / and a stone in my

bed." Riddled with references to death, "Cold Cold Ground" is a sobering look at empty aspirations, violence, and the futility and unfairness of life. Dreams are buried in the consequences of war, as anything beyond survival becomes frivolous, "the piano is firewood / Times Square is a dream," and everyone will "lay down together in the cold cold ground" if only to escape reality and to be a little bit closer to their dreams.

The song "Time" (*Rain Dogs*) portrays the undoing of a man who is "east of East St. Louis" and is falling into disconsolateness as he begins to comprehend that his life has become desperate and elusive. He has a growing awareness that "Yes, it's true there's nothing left for him down here" and feels deserted as even "The band is going home" and "the moon is in the street." He then joins the army where everyone pretends they are orphans in order to evade the emotional strain, commitment, and responsibility to family and friends who are left behind to "put a candle in the window / and a kiss upon [their] lips / Till the dish outside the window fills with rain." The forged reality of erasure and negation that is inherent in the life of a soldier or any wanderer is depicted by the lines, "And the things you can't remember / Tell the things you can't forget that / History puts a saint in every dream." The dreams and prayers of sailors, soldiers, or any wanderer can easily become confused, especially when "these mamas boys" who "just don't know when to quit" are questioned by Matilda and forced to re-evaluate the motivations for their actions. Soldiers and sailors protect themselves from their emotions by not becoming attached to the people they meet, as the fewer personal feelings that are invested, the less it will cost to move on. There is a terrible beauty in the lines, "So just close your eyes, son / And this won't hurt a bit" that evokes the deep isolation and desperate heroism of being caught between nowhere and no one, trying to tackle the world alone.

The trauma of experiencing war firsthand overwhelms the soldier in the song "Swordfishtrombone" (*Swordfishtrombones*) who "came home from the war / with a party in

his head / and an idea for a fireworks display / and he knew that he'd be ready with / a stainless steel machete / and a half a pint of Ballentine's each day" and hid himself away in a room above a hardware store, unable to properly function and reorient himself to reality. In order to repudiate the nightmares and trepidation of combat imbedded in his thoughts and memories, and to unearth new possibilities of life after war, he "packed up all his expectations/ he lit out for California / with a flyswatter banjo on his knee / with lucky tiger in his angel hair / and Benzedrine for getting there." The alluded to substance and alcohol abuse may have helped the soldier to escape the traumatic ravages of war and the constant memories that plagued him, but combined with his psychological instability from his military service, it also led to violent crimes where "he got 20 years for lovin' her / from some "Oklahoma governor." The various stories of his life events all indicate routines of escapement and pronounced mental instability with his "mad dog that wouldn't sit still." He is lêft surrounded by colourful rumours where "some say he's doing the obituary mambo / and some say he's hanging on the wall," and "some say they saw him down in Birmingham, / sleeping in a box car going by." It is a struggle to piece together the truth of his life as "this yarn's perhaps the only thing / that holds this man together." This intangible character, whose existence seems based upon uncertainty and unknowing, envelops many aspects of the idea of the wanderer as he drifts through his realities and the imaginations of those who vie to tell the biggest tale.

"Tom Traubert's Blues" (*Small Change*) has the main character Tom wanting to go "waltzing Matilda" to break the despondency of being a soldier and "an innocent victim of a blinded alley" where he is "tired of all these soldiers here / no one speaks English and everything's broken / and [his] Stacys are soaking wet." The song "Tom Traubert's Blues" is based upon a repeated reference to the Australian folksong "Waltzing Matilda" by Banjo Peterson, where the term waltzing Matilda meant to go wandering around looking for a job

carrying only a pack with your bare necessities. The pack was called a matilda, and if you were to walk behind someone carrying such a pack on their back, the up and down movement of the pack would appear to "waltz." The lines, "the girls down by the strip tease shows go / waltzing Matilda" and "Matilda's the defendant, she killed about a hundred / and she follows you wherever you may go" are connotations of the females called "Matildas" that would follow around the soldiers in the thirty year European war and keep them warm at night. Tom Traubert has lost his patron saint of safe travel, "St. Christopher," and is not looking for sympathy, but just wants the simple diversion of going "waltzing Matilda" to escape the "manslaughter dragnets and the ghosts that sell memories" which otherwise occupy his mind. He is a wanderer who travels alone "with a battered old suitcase / to a hotel someplace" while nursing a "wound that will never heal" and searching for his personal dreams and aspirations.

vii. TRAIN SONGS

Trains are a recurring image in Tom Waits' music. Characters are seen leaving on trains, experiencing life jumping trains, or the outside world is depicted as it would be viewed through the observation window of a train. The actual physical image of the train can be found represented in the wheeze, groan, chug, and clank of songs such as "Gospel Train" from *The Black Rider*, where Tom Waits attempts to recreate the actual sound of a locomotive with train whistles, low wind and string instruments, and imaginative percussion. There are rich sources of imagery and humanity associated with trains such as: scenes of slow, heavy departure, loved ones fading into the distance, picturesque scenery, dark tunnels, freight yards littered with hobos and vagabonds, thick black billows of coal smoke and steam, the haunting sound of a train whistle blast, the immediate sense of being transported somewhere else and not being able to get off until you arrive, a feeling of escape, and the sensation of being conveyed from one place to somewhere new and alive with possibilities.

The trains found in Tom Waits' songs are also often accompanied by the visualization of train hoppers and their insecurities, and the migratory nature of their lifestyles. Trains provide an escape route for vagabonds who can simply ride the rails to the next freight yard or town when life becomes too unbearable in one place. The grind and wheeze of the train engine and the blasts of the whistle fit snugly into Tom Waits' musical soundscapes and add an appropriate smear of coal dust to his lyrics and characters. The sonic beauty of a train wreck and the piercing scream of metal against metal inspire many of Tom Waits' songs. By stepping on a train, his characters are hoping to immerse themselves in the allure of unpredictability and new and bizarre elements.

The use of trains provides a sharp contrast to air travel, where the images are much stranger and of a completely different sentiment. With airplanes, loved ones walk through a metal detector and disappear, so that the same sense of departure and closure achieved by watching someone fade into the distance on a train is not possible. The presence of the image of a locomotive fading away is very effectively handled metaphorically in the song, "Time" (*Rain Dogs*), where soldiers "all pretend they're Orphans / and their memory's like a train / you can see it getting smaller as it pulls away." Trains embody the notion of forward motion and moving characters to new places and new experiences. Each destination is merely a stopover for the vagabond stranger who is "pushed from behind by hopes frustrated, and pulled forward by hopes untested" (Bauman 1996, 24). But as trains and locomotives always are moving forward, returning to the life previously held is not a simple accomplishment.

"Town With No Cheer" (*Swordfishtrombones*) is about a small miserable old town in Australia that was devastated when the Victoria Railway Company decided that the only bar in the town which it operated was no longer necessary and "the train stopped in Serviceton less and less often." This small town, whose existence depended upon the goods and services it provided and received as a train stop for the last sixty five years, was now slowly being

abandoned as there was no longer an "oasis for a dry local grazier" or "refreshment for a thirsty jackaroo / from Melbourne to Adelaide on the overlander." The townspeople were dependent upon the travellers who rode the rails, and once they no longer stopped in Serviceton, they had no other means for their livelihood. The Freedom bell ringing at the beginning of the song, accompanied by lonely bagpipes, helps create the feeling of sadness looming over the ghost "town with no cheer" as it is viewed from the window of the train passing by. There are stark dichotomies highlighted between new and old, urban and rural, prosperity and regression, which are created from the train being used as a point of observation as it separates the "newfangled buffet cars and faster locomotives" from the dusty "long faces" of the eighty townspeople of Serviceton. The train, which once symbolized possibility for this small town, has now become a source of heartache, and for Vic Rail, the whistle-stop is only a fleeting memory in a business ledger.

Trains are important fixtures in the lifestyles of wandering hobos and vagabonds as "freight hopping" is a primary means of transportation and survival. "Diamonds and Gold" (*Rain Dogs*), describes the difficulty a hobo has in tearing himself away from life on the railroad as he says "goodbye to the railroad / And the mad dogs of summer / and everything that [he] knows." The song explores the desperation of life on the railroads: "What some men will do here for diamonds / What some men will do here for gold," where everyone's survival instincts overshadow any issues of morality or ethics, as even if they are wounded or broken they will keep on going and "sleep at the side of the road." The lyrics also speak to the inherent greed and avarice of capitalist society. Brutality and violence are often encountered in the lives of vagabonds and railroad tramps as one character was attacked and had his knees shattered or more figuratively, a character rising to success had his hopes destroyed, and like scavengers looking for something to get them ahead, "all his disciples / They shave in the gutter / And gather what's left of his clothes." For these railroad

vagabonds and opportunists, "a hole in the ladder" renders escape from their personal turmoil impossible, as the "hills are agreen" only in stolen dreams and even then, their dreams are not safe from pillage.

A soldier in "Ruby's Arms" (*Heartattack and Vine*) has to leave his love in the middle of the night, taking with him nothing but his "railroad boots, and [his] leather jacket" and heads out where "the hobos at the freight yards, have kept their fires burning." Overwhelmed by his tumultuous emotions, he is torn by his compulsion to get on a train away from this place and the knowledge that by leaving, he will "never kiss [her] lips again." His need for independence and personal equanimity carried a greater weight and this character is taken away by the next train, hoping all of his pain stays behind. For this trainhopper, his sense of purpose is found in the life experiences he acquires riding the rails. He keeps his adventures short but continuous, as "the shorter the trip, the greater the chance of completing it" (Bauman 1996, 25).

Trains and train stations are places that hurt, lost and dejected characters in Tom Waits' songs seek refuge and solace, and where hopeful people may dream or create new identities for themselves. These places signify, for some, the potential for change and the opportunity to move on to a new place, to a new start. Trains also possess a strangely inexplicable allure of promise and adventure. Wilhelm, an innocent city clerk, is drawn down the path of diablerie and corruption by a train which had the devil as its conductor asseverating, "Come on people / got to get on board / Train is leaving / and there's room for one more," in the song "Gospel Train" (*The Black Rider*). Waits' characters who are seduced by life on the railroads are strangers wherever they go and are governed by intuition, precaution, risks, and chance as "Satan will fool you" even though you "Trust in the Lord." The lifestyle of a train hopper involves anticipating the movements of the adversary and being flexible to the obstacles the world inevitably conjures. The trajectory of the vagabond

is determined often simply by the destination of the next train and therefore, everyday is subject to no advance itinerary and is unpredictably pieced together.

viii. THE WILD YEARS

One particular character in Tom Waits' music, an entertainer named Frank O'Brien, is subjected to extraordinary development, worked into the fabric of numerous songs as early as "Frank's Song" (*The Early Years V1*), illustrated in depth in the "trilogy" of *Swordfishtrombones*, *Rain Dogs*, and *Frank's Wild Years*, and transformed into a powerful theatrical work. Elements of insanity, escapism, military trauma, encounters with temptation, addiction, and failed love, are the subjects and themes that Tom Waits explored and eventually coalesced into the personality of Frank by the time he created *Frank's Wild Years*. Biographical information on Frank must be gleamed retrospectively from textual indications, as Tom Waits obscurely scattered the circumstances of Frank's past in the songs from these three albums.

Swordfishtrombones, *Rain Dogs*, and *Frank's Wild Years* can be considered musically, stylistically, and in terms of production values, a trilogy. These three albums showed a severe departure from Tom Waits' past musical styles and a progressive exploration into new timbral and textural varieties seeped in exciting new instrumentation. These albums are linked by the character Frank, who is introduced in *Swordfishtrombones*, developed in *Rain Dogs*, and then followed on his ill-fated orphic quest for fame in the play, *Frank's Wild Years*. Though all of the songs from *Swordfishtrombones* and *Rain Dogs* do not necessarily contain biographical material or direct references to the character Frank, they provide a foundation for the emotional and psychological development of his wanderer character, and how it gets represented lyrically and musically. The fated saga of this battered musician, who abandons his small town misery, began in *Swordfishtrombones* with the song

"Frank's Wild Years" where the protagonist Frank torches his suburban Southern California home and heads north on the Hollywood Freeway. An ambitious accordion player who has fallen on hard times and miserable failure, Frank finds himself freezing on a park bench in a snowstorm, with only fleeting memories of his imagined triumphs as a night-club entertainer.

Frank began (on *Swordfishtrombones*) in typical middle class bondage where he "sold used office furniture / out there on San Fernando Road / and assumed a $30 000 loan / at 15¼% and put a down payment on a little two bedroom place" and leads a dull, uneventful, and unsatisfying life. He had an insubstantial relationship with his wife who was "a spent piece of used jet trash / made good bloody marys" and was repulsed by the family pet which was "a little Chihuahua named Carlos / that had some kind of skin disease / and was totally blind." Since he was leading a normal middle class life with no major turmoil, Frank was forced into the illusion that "they were so happy." But for a suppressed night-club entertainer, being settled down in the Valley was not bringing him any closer to attaining his dreams of success and fame. One night on his way home from his unfulfilling job as a salesman, he decided he could tolerate it no longer and "stopped at the liquor store, picked up a couple Mickey's Big Mouths / drank 'em in the car on his way / to the Shell station, he got a gallon of / gas in a can, drove home, doused / everything in the house, torched it / parked across the street, laughing, / watching it all burn, all Halloween / orange and chimney red." His actions signalled the beginning of a rash of irrational behaviour to follow as he "put on the top forty station / got on the Hollywood Freeway / headed north" and had one final thought, "Never could stand that dog," as he set out to make his dreams come true.

With the background emotional and psychological profile of Frank introduced, *Frank's Wild Years* appropriately reveals his intense journey of imagined triumph, fabricated success, predestined failure, and lacerated redemption. The play and album, *Frank's Wild Years*, takes the form of a reminiscence, the story of an ordinary person who let dreams and

fantasy predominate reality in his life. Frank lived his life without consequence and encountered people, situations, and opportunities without truly being accepted by or being submerged in these realities. Eventually Frank's dreams are seen shattering and crashing to the ground, and the mourning for a life lost sets in, in the sobering "Cold Cold Ground" and "Train Song" (*Frank's Wild Years*). The play, co-written by Kathleen Brennan, featured Tom Waits in the lead role of Frank O'Brien, and was fully staged in Chicago at the Steppenwolf Theatre for a three month run to packed houses in the summer of 1986. It was his wife, Kathleen Brennan, who came up with the very appropriate secondary title "*un operachi romantico in two acts*" for *Frank's Wild Years* signifying the combination of popular music styles such as mariachi with classical operatic elements in this theatrical work. After working on *One From the Heart* with Francis Ford Coppola, the possibilities of opera and completely integrating a fully realized story and intricate characters into music were explored by Tom Waits with his work on *Frank's Wild Years*.

The story of one man's downfall and eventual redemption in the play begins with an impoverished and disconsolate Frank freezing on a park Bench in East St. Louis re-evaluating his shortcomings and failures moments before death. For Tom Waits, the story of *Frank's Wild Years* chronicles

> a guy from a small town who goes out to seek his fame and fortune; a standard odyssey. Eventually, what happens is that he dreams his way back home to the saloon where he began. He's given...a ticket home, and there he tells the story of his success. But he stops in the middle of it, and tells the real story. He's no hero, he is no champion; wasn't what he says he was. He was, really, a guy who stepped on every bucket in the road. His friends pull him out of it, and tell him he's got plenty to live for. In the end, he wakes up on the bench, ready to start again. (Humphries 1989, 97)

As Waits commented, "It was the snowflake that didn't fall that saved him from hitting the freezing point" and gave him a second chance (Humphries 1989, 97). Frank is a wanderer who viewed "human reality as a series of episodes, that is as events without past and with no

consequences" and eventually "imagined himself a scriptwriter and a director pulling the strings of other people's lives without damaging or distorting their fate" (Bauman 1996, 26). As Frank attempted to recreate and gain control over his own life and achievements, he simply patched together reality and his imaginative creations without truly recognizing their boundaries or consequences. The scene is set for the story of Frank's descent by Tom Waits in the liner notes of *Frank's Wild Years*:

> Rainville. Hardly ever did though, rain that is. It was nowhere. Railroad tracks ran up the back of the state like stitches. Telephone lines slashed the orange dawns like a wrecked ships rigging...And when it rained the whole town went mad. Dogs ran wild in the streets. Frank was squeezed between scrap iron places and radiator repair shops...Rainville, good place to dream yourself away from. When the trains thundered past the backyard fence, bound for Oxnard, Lompoc, Gila Bend, Stanfield and parts south where the wind blew big, Frank would count the cars and make a wish just like he did when he was a kid...At least something was getting out of town alive...
>
> One moonlit night Frank packed up his accordion and said blow wind blow wherever you may go...cause I'm going straight to the top...up where the air is clean.

Frank is well travelled and has experienced his fair share of life's struggles and hardships. *Frank's Wild Years* opens with "Hang On St. Christopher" where once again Frank is seeking escape and he is plagued by both good and evil forces as he tells St. Christopher, the patron saint of safe travel, to hang on "on the passenger side / open it up so the devil can ride." His goals of achievement and ambitions as a lounge entertainer crystallize in the song "Straight to the Top" as he experiences the allure and seductive power of success, Reno, and disillusionment.

Feeling he is governed by a will much more powerful and dominating than his own, Frank can not resist its pull and appropriates temptation as an excuse for his actions and blatant disregard for consequence, as exemplified in the song "Temptation" where his "will has disappeared / now [his] confusion is oh so clear." Temptation becomes closely linked both to the construction of Frank's illusory reality where for him, "everything is made from dreams" and to the assailable constitution of his dreams where he admits, "I just know that

she is made of smoke / but I have lost my way" but must continue down this path because he has no where else to turn and is not ready to fully abandon his goals quite yet.

"Innocent When You Dream," reveals Frank's languish for his fissured past and marks his inability to find resolution in his life beyond the realm of his escapist dreams. Frank is haunted by guilt from his broken past, riddled with incidents from broken relationships, but finds comfort in the thought that "you're innocent when you dream." The longing for his past as his present situation rapidly deteriorates continues in "Yesterday is Here," where he comprehends that "If you want money in your pocket / and a top hat on your head / a hot meal on your table / and a blanket on your bed" you will have to wait until "yesterday is here." For Frank, the potential for success lies before him and he needs to try and actively chase after his dreams while "the moon is shining bright" rather than hope the past will somehow reinvent itself. He is unwilling to suppress his goals of fame and glory, and his need for constant escape is invigorated by his belief that "If you want to go / where rainbows end," you will have to say goodbye to the past and move forward as "dreams come true / baby up ahead."

Frank constantly struggles to get by in his daily life as he fights for control and seeks out the solace and security of love. "Please Wake Me Up" gives a glimpse at the perfect love he yearns for in the midst of failed relationships where, "when our divorces are final / She'll fit right into my scheme." His romantic pursuits and passion live with his hopes in his dreams, the only place true companionship and comfort exists for Frank. Act I of the album *Frank's Wild Years* concludes with Frank dreaming "away tomorrow" and running away from himself and his life's struggles in the song "Frank's Theme." His solution for all of his problems and avoiding actuality is to "Dream away the tears in your eyes / Dream away your sorrows / Dream away all your goodbyes," and convinces himself that "up ahead the road is turning / turning for you and me." Frank has gathered life experiences that everyone can

relate to, such as heartbreak, despair, depression, fear, temptation, but copes with his crises in a less than ideal manner.

In Act II of *Frank's Wild Years*, Frank's dreams become porous and seeped in reality as he no longer can avoid or escape truth as depicted in "More than Rain." He realizes that his dreams are not working out as he had planned and as his disillusions crumble he understands that his problems cannot be dismissed as just a little rain "that falls on [his] parade tonight." Penniless and ill-fated, Frank sees that "nobody's caught the bouquet" and "nothing is going [his] way" as his dreamscape slowly crumbles and gives way to grey skies. He is cautioned against again retreating to the oblivion of his dreams and is entreated by a street corner evangelist to be aware of his inability to resist temptation and the allurement of evil in the song "Way Down in the Hole." Frank is told, "you gotta keep the devil / way down in the hole / he's got the fire and the fury / at his command" and that he would have nothing to worry about if only he would "hold on to Jesus' hand" and walk alongside the angels who will shield him with their wings.

Frank's wild abandon and determination to achieve success emerges in the Vegas version of "Straight to the Top" and "I'll take New York" as he reaches for "the moon and the stars" and believes in impossible fantasies. He wants to be so successful that everyone would "Roll out the carpet / Strike up the band" and "break into the best / champagne when [he] land[s]" as his career flourishes in New York. However, Frank's evil and chaotic constitution dilutes these imaginary aspirations with the outrageous images from "Telephone Call from Istanbul" where the character spends "All night long on the broken glass / livin in a medicine chest / mediteromanian hotel back / sprawled across a roll top desk" while a "monkey rode the blade on an overhead fan." His encounter with this distorted reality brings forth the erratic advice to "never trust a man in a blue trench coat / never drive a car when you're dead."

"Train Song" describes Frank's decline and is truly representative of the end of his road. The train signifies the misery, hopelessness, and failure at which Frank has arrived, as he finally "broke down in East St. Louis / On the Kansas City Line" with no dreams, no money, and no one. In the past, when faced with difficulty or seemingly insurmountable pressures, Frank fled and took his travels somewhere new, but now he is stranded, alone, cold, impoverished, dreamless, and aware that "What made [his] dreams so hollow / was standing at the depot / with a steeple full of swallows / that could never ring the bell." He laments that, "It was a train that took me away from here / but a train can't bring me back home," when faced with the pressure of accepting responsibility for the direction of his life. He has overshadowed his life and its truths with fabrications and disillusions that actually took him further away from his goals and filled the "steeple full of swallows" rather than giving him the clapper's rope. He, in effect, attempted to gain control and rectify the insanity of his life by removing himself from any negative, violent, confusing, or painful situations, which resulted in him evading responsibility further and providing himself with even more instability. Now, he is immensely "sorry for what he has done" and though he has not necessarily found salvation, he is a survivor, saved by the "snowflake that didn't fall" (Humphries 1989, 97), and has found himself with a second chance.

ix. HUMAN ODDITIES

An abundance of characters that develop in Tom Waits' music are societal and human oddities that do not resemble or commingle with the norm physically or in their lifestyles. They are midgets, freaks, or eyeball kids who can find fame and acceptance only in a circus side-show. The circus provides escape and a vision of acceptance for everyone, a promise of a nomadic lifestyle with the delightful sense of belonging and the absence of responsibility. The character in "Whistle Down the Wind" (*Bone Machine*) dreams of going

to "places where they never sleep / And the circus never ends," and dancing alongside the twisted caravan that is an unending train of reality-eluding dreams, sights, and sounds. The importance of carnival to the theme of the wanderer is its constant transportation from town to town, and the transformation of the performers from ordinary to hideously distorted or from freakish outcasts to centre ring stars. The identities of Waits' wandering carnival characters are often dictated by their unusual physical characteristics that are immense liabilities which cannot easily be sloughed off. For these outcast or freakish characters, "*fitness* – the capacity to move swiftly where the action is and be ready to take in experiences as they come – takes precedence over *health*, that idea of the standard of normalcy and of keeping that standard stable and unscathed" (Bauman 1996 24).

The Black Rider is essentially the devil's carnival with a beautiful array of freaks and a band that accompanies him on saws, biscuit tins, and bones. Rather than exploring the cotton candy splendour of a delightful three ring circus, Tom Waits exposes the chamber of horror found in the dilapidated tent out back. *The Black Rider* is laden with decadence, decay, and themes of dependence, whether on drugs, magic bullets, the devil, or the acceptance and acknowledgement of others. The crank and wheeze of the orchestra and the howl of tormented souls in *The Black Rider* exudes the morbid curiosity, fearful excitement, and lamentable patheticism that embody the circus freakshow. The stripped down, heavily percussive "bone" music is aptly indicative of the campy ringmaster devil who traps the soul of an innocent city clerk named Wilhelm, and explicitly reveals a world which, like the circus, rejects moral standards and is governed by a much different and darker set of rules.

Beginning with a drumroll and a megaphone bellow, "Lucky Day Overture" from *The Black Rider* displays the circus barker from "Harry's Harbour Bizarre" drawing in the crowds to see all the "Human Oddities. That's right, you'll see the Three Headed Baby, you'll see Hitler's brain, you'll see Lea Graff the German midget who sat in J.P. Morgan's

lap, You'll see Priscilla Bajano, the monkey woman. Jo Jo the dog face boy." This moritat gives a fitting welcome to a fantastical German expressionist carnival. The following song, "The Black Rider," continues the dizzying wheeze and grind resonance of circus music, with the devil, Peg Leg, now taking his place as the circus barker entreating everyone to "Come on along with the Black Rider / We'll have a gay old time" and follow his seductive lead into "the web of the black spider" where he'll "drink your blood like wine." Tom Waits effectively incorporates the carnival into the realm of the absurd, bizarre, and grotesque in *The Black Rider*, which sonically offers the aberrant thrill of a freakshow or a ride on an archaic Tilt-a-Whirl assembled by a drunk carny. The recurrent instrumental "Carnival" pieces from *The Black Rider* were originally scored for strings, trombone, bass clarinet, horn, bassoon, alto flute, bass, and percussion. The "Carnival" music fanatically clunks along with metallic clanks and growls, train whistle blasts, and other bizarre sounds interjecting throughout, capturing the vivacity and dementia of the circus.

Absurd scenes saturated with the interactions of mutant and anomalous characters provide a vivid richness and strange beauty to Tom Waits' music as exemplified in "A Little Rain" (*Bone Machine*) where "The Ice Man's mule is parked / Outside the bar / Where a man with missing fingers / Plays a strange guitar / And the German dwarf / Dances with the butcher's son." Similar crazed images germinate in "Such a Scream" (*Bone Machine*) which is a wild paean by a character called Pale Face dedicated to an unearthly woman with "A halo, wings, horns, and a tail / Shoveling coal inside [his] dreams" whose praises go "clank and boom and steam." When treading in the realm where dreams reign sovereign and the inhabitants are "Pale Face," and "the Eyeball Kid," there are no laws to guide the sensibilities. The adulation of this "Donnie gal from mortal clay," whose "lips are red / She is the queen," is not melodious and tender, but emerging from the conversation between two

human oddities themselves, the Eyeball Kid (a recurrent character) and Pale Face, this acclamation is brimming with "crooked lines" and "machine gun haste."

Making numerous appearances throughout Tom Waits' repertoire is the character "Eyeball Kid," who was "born without a body, not even a brow," and "is not conventionally handsome / He'll never be tall," so that everyday life and sustenance is an enormous challenge. "Eyeball Kid" is fully introduced in *Mule Variations*, where his humble beginnings are documented. His seemingly normal parents, "Zenora Bariella and Coriander Pyle / had sixteen children in the usual style / They had a curio museum / and they had no guile" and like all parents wishing for success for their children, "All they ever wanted was a show biz child." So on the 7th of December, 1949 they got "a show biz child" certainly, though perhaps he was not exactly as they had hoped, and by the time he was nine, he rolled off to join a roving circus tour and find his own kind of success. As with every potential talent, slick opportunist managers crawl out to give the promise that "your name will be in lights.../ and that's no doubt / But you got to have / a manager that's what / it's all about." The heartless rapaciousness of this carny manager is shrouded by his contrived concern for the fact that the Eyeball Kid is constantly harassed and bombarded with abuse, as "People would point / People would stare" and he promises to always be there to protect him. But no amount of kindness goes without a binding contract, and the Eyeball Kid, like many freaks and human oddities before him, is forced to "cry right here on / the dotted line." However, despite the formidable obstacles that he must endure "when he can't ever speak / and he can't ever blink," he dreams big and implores his manager, "all you got to do is / book me into Carnegie Hall." It is the human oddities, the Eyeball Kid, Burnt Face Jake, Jo Jo the dog face boy, and Pale Face, that shatter the illusions of idealizations and perfection, showing that "We are all lost in the / wilderness we're as blind as can be / He came down to teach us / how to really see." However, Carnegie Hall is an impossible dream and the carnival side-show is

the only place that truly embraces the aberrant, so inevitably, the circus barker clamours, "Give it up and throw me down / A couple of quid / Everybody wants to see / the Eyeball Kid."

The opera *Alice*, a collaboration between Robert Wilson (*The Black Rider*), Tom Waits, and Paul Schmidt, was based loosely on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and also refers to the Eyeball Kid. Here he makes a brief appearance at the Mad Tea Party where the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse sing "Have I told you all about the Eyeball Kid / He was born alone inside a Petri dish / And he was born without a body or a brow." The character of the caterpillar, "Tabletop Joe," is loosely related to the Eyeball Kid in that he sings "Well, my Mama didn't want me / On the day I was born / Born without a body / I got nothing but scorn." Encountering similar life experiences as the Eyeball Kid, the caterpillar also had tremendous aspirations and passion, despite his imperfections, as he expressed, "I always loved music / All I had was my hands / And I dreamed I'd be famous / And I'd work at the Sands / I had trouble with the pedals / But I had a strong left hand / And I could play Stravinsky / On a baby grand." However, he too realizes that his features and talents are not considered acceptable for the traditional mainstream concert stage and he decides instead to join the circus where he received "top billing / In the Dreamland show / [he]had [his] own orchestra / Starring Tabletop Joe / And the man without a body / Proved everyone was wrong / [he] was rich and [he] was famous / And [he] was where [he] belonged," an illusory place where reality was distorted and dreams seemed to come true.

The outlandish freaks that populate Tom Waits' music are fascinating and sometimes astonishing characters with intriguing stories. For these societal misfits, happiness is fleeting at best and they are constantly seeking out somewhere that they are truly accepted and valued for their differences and who they are, rather than these characteristics always rendering them spectacles. The carnival thoroughly encompasses the element of the wanderer as it meanders

across the countryside in a nomadic bohemian caravan, with its exploited performers in demeaning costumes and cheap illusions, seeking out success, personal glory, and fame, or at least notoriety.

x. A LITTLE DROP OF POISON: OUTLAWS AND BANDITS

Whether remorseful or unrepentant, the outlaws that dwell in Tom Waits' songs are all incessant wanderers, forced into an itinerant lifestyle in order to maintain their freedom and evade the consequences of their actions. Society is threatened by the freedom and disregard for order and legislation that these individuals have since they are always on the move and unable to be bound by society's controls or rules. Not necessarily road ramblers or vagabond wanderers by choice, Waits' outlaws are always trying to outrun their past transgressions and escape to a new life. Whether revenge, fury, necessity, rebellion, or psychotic episodes provoke their flagitious or violent actions, the path of a fugitive is very lonely and tormented; they are pursued not only by the law, but also by the demons inside of their head. Their lives are sporadic and their interactions with others superficial, unless their companions are willing to share the repercussions of their past and accept a lifetime of pursuit. While trying to outrun the hounds and find sanctuary, some may seek freedom through redemption, others just freedom, and others still luxuriate in the resplendence of their notoriety.

In "Potter's Field" (*Foreign Affairs*), the story of a nefarious criminal named "Nightstick" is told against a blustery orchestral tone poem by a character who is "the only one who knows just where he stayed last night." A fierce thief whose "days are numbered" and is being tracked "down like a dog," Nightstick slept with one eye open "in a wreckin yard in a switchblade storm / in a wheelbarrow with nothing but revenge to keep him warm / and a half a million dollars in unmarked bills." The character Nightstick experiences a full

range of emotional turmoil, from that of a hardened deceitful criminal to the vulnerable wretch who is shivering "in a miserable heap / with the siren for a lullaby singing him to sleep." Involved in a perilous confrontation, which resulted in him "bleeding from a buttonhole / torn from a slug fired from the barrel of a two dollar gun," the indestructible outlaw is suddenly mortally wounded. As he dresses "the hole in his gut with a hundred dollar bandage," he realizes his actions were in vain as all he has is "a king's ransom for a bedspread that don't amount to nuttin / just cobweb strings on a busted ukulele." Injured and driven to madness, money quickly became insignificant as he was "throwin out handfuls of a bloodstained salary," and then "winked beneath a rainsoaked brim" as he disappeared without a dream into the night. The storyteller claims to know, along "with a spade on rikers island," where the infamous nightstick escaped to, if he escaped at all.

The character Romeo in the song "Romeo is Bleeding" (*Blue Valentine*) is an example of the tough bloodthirsty ruffian who is inflamed with murderous revenge for the death of his brother. Having satisfied his vindictive rage, Romeo, now a renegade fleeing the law, returns momentarily to his neighbourhood on 18th Street, retaining his cool bravado, "looking so hard against the hood of his car / and puttin out a cigarette in his hand." For all "the pachucos at the pumps / at romeros paint and body" the evening began as just another night spent "seein' how far they can spit," but now they are huddled in the brake lights of Romeo's '58 Belair listening to how he killed a sheriff with his knife. As the sirens wail from the crime scene, "romeo just laughs and says / all the racket in the world ain't never gonna / save that copper's ass" and assures everyone listening that the cop will "never see another summertime for gunnin down [his] brother / and leavin him like a dog beneath a car without his knife." Romeo is from a fierce Mafioso community where weakness is fatal and a hardened exterior is essential to survival, and from an early age he cultivated an incorrigible façade. He is an emotional wanderer, living in the present, creating the emotional fronts

necessary to carry on his dangerous and unpredictable lifestyle. He is a hero to the other boys, who when he asks for a cigarette, "they all reach for their pack / and frankie lights it for him / and pats him on the back / and throws a bottle at a milk truck / and as it breaks he grabs his nuts," and they all know they could be just like him if only they had his intrepidity and cool nerve. Unable to reveal weakness or defeat, Romeo "sings along with the radio / with a bullet in his chest," not wanting to disappoint or disenchant his disciples who "all try to stand like romeo / beneath the moon cut like a sickle" and "all agree its clear / that everything is cool now that romeo's here." Unwilling to display his mortal fragility, Romeo escapes to the movie theatre where he will "die without a whimper / like every heroes dream / just an angel with a bullet / and cagney on the screen," forever immortalized as a hardened street legend.

A mysterious and threatening outlaw, whom it is believed that "beneath his coat there are wings," is the subject of the song "Black Wings" (*Bone Machine*). He is an infamous legend that "rides through your dreams on a coach" where "horses and the fence posts / In the moonlight look like bones" and all the stories seem possible through the distorted haze of his notoriety. He is a vengeful bandit who lives by the rule of "Take an eye for an eye / Take a tooth for a tooth" and is very careful to "Never leave a trace or forget a face / Of any man at the table," which gives him the aura of omnipotence. Possessing seemingly unearthly and extraordinary powers, he defies capture and cannot be bound even with "mortar, stone and chain / He broke out of every prison / Boots mount the staircase / The door is flung back open / He's not there for he has risen," and breathes fire into the crazed rumours surrounding his reputation. Dangerous, intangible, and undefeatable, he is skilled at deceit and can turn himself into a stranger as life necessitates. He is a reputably guileful and insidious drifter who "once killed a man with a guitar string / He's been seen at the table with kings" and "once saved a baby from drowning." While some people say they fear him, others claim to admire him, but because "he steals his promise / One look in his eye / Everyone denies / Ever

having met him," knowing that as evil incarnate, he will always plague their nightmares and terrorize their dreams.

"Walking Spanish" (*Rain Dogs*) concerns a criminal on death row who is unable to evade persecution and ends up "walking spanish down the hall." "Walking Spanish" refers to the involuntary and humiliating stride of someone whose neck and lower torso are strongly grasped and raised to spur them along in a controlled manner, or more loosely, it refers to being forced to do something. This criminal is violent, armed with a homemade pistol that "feels just like a jaybird / The way it fits into his hand." An unspecified malicious act is committed with his blade camouflaged "in his trick towel," and he is once again restrained and forced to walk the painful and opprobrious gait of "walking spanish" down the hall. This character attempts to live his life consequence-free, similar to the manner of a vagabond who is unbound by societal order or restraints, however he is largely unsuccessful. The lyrics "Slip him a picture of our Jesus / Or give him a spoon to dig a hole / What all he done ain't no one's business" show that he is indifferent to redemption and does not disclose his past, reveal his motivations for his actions, or substantiate rumours. He is self-righteous and rebellious, as "Every face looks right up at Mason," and he does not submit to the interrogation or torture of others when he was caught, for "He never sang when he got hoodwinked / They tried it all but he never would." His will is infallible only because it has to be, as he faces his unavoidable execution knowing that "Tomorrow morning there'll be laundry / But he'll be somewhere else to hear the call," and there is nothing he can do to prevent it. Despite his brash humanity, as he is forced to remove his watch and rings before his execution, he cannot help but submit momentarily to his immense vulnerability as "Even Jesus wanted just a little more time" when he was forced to walk Spanish to his death.

xi. CROSSROADS

Innumerable times life's wanderings lead to the crossroads, where temptation and the devil find a comfortable abode, and where preachers and evangelists admonish. It is the place where insanity lurks and crumbling souls seek redemption and escape. The threats of evil and addiction menacingly lurk around the crossroads; their magnetic charms running rampant in the fantastical visions of those who find themselves at a maniacal or vexatious crux in their mortal coil. The crossroads are as personally meaningful as the lowside of the road, as everybody knows where it is and has, at some point, questioned themselves there.

Themes of deception, addiction, and insanity weave throughout *The Black Rider*, which tells the story of a city clerk named Wilhelm who was determined to marry the daughter of a huntsman insistent upon maintaining his legacy. In the song "Just the Right Bullets," Wilhelm, a miserable hunter, finds himself drawn into a deal with the devil who convinced him, "You can never go a hunting / With just a flintlock and a hound / You won't go home with a bunting / If you blow a hundred rounds" and offered him magic bullets that would hit all of his desired targets, making him an acceptable son-in-law for the privileged huntsman. A slick dealer, the devil claimed to just want Wilhelm to be happy and promised to "fix [his] wagon and [his] musket" so that he will never have to go home empty handed again. The devil enticed Wilhelm with the bargain that "To have sixty silver wishes / Is a small price to pay / They'll be your private little fishes / And they'll never swim away," and assured him it was an offer that he simply could not refuse. However, as revealed in the song "Flash Pan Hunter," "each sulfurous bullet may have it's own wit / each cartridge comes with a warning," but Wilhelm still fell violently into the rapturous addiction that successfully hid his deficiency as a hunter, so much so that he's "cutting off his fingers / So they'll fit into his glove." The whole time the devil "does his Polka / With a hatchet in his hand," waiting for his delicate prey to fall even more vulnerable and needy of his provisions.

With the magic bullets, Wilhelm's marksmanship improved and his dependence on these bullets grew to addiction. As a warning to Wilhelm, the story of George Schmid's descent into addiction is told in the song "Crossroads." The song chronicles the disillusion and desperation that leads "a good straight boy to begin with" into the seemingly harmless magic bullets but "that leads straight to Devil's work, / just like marijuana leads to heroin." The character George Schmid, found escape in the magic bullets that allowed him to shoot a target without taking straight aim, but at a very costly price negotiated with the devil. The denial a new addict feels towards his impending ruin and lack of control is found in the lyrics: "You think you can take them bullets or leave 'em do you? / Just save a few for your bad days? / Well, now we all have those bad days when you can't hit for shit. / The more of them magics you use, the more bad days you have without them. / so it comes down finally to all your days being bad without the bullets. / It's magics or nothing. / Time to stop chippying around and kidding yourself, / kid, you're hooked, heavy as lead." However, even though George was "out there at the crossroads, molding the devil's bullets," he still believed that he was in control of his destiny and that the bullets were under his control, hitting what he wanted them to hit. But, like Wilhelm, "old George didn't rightly know what he was getting himself into," and the freedom and escape from reality provided by the bullets slowly disintegrated into a dependency even more unbearable than the situation which was originally being evaded.

Inevitably, Wilhelm used up all of his magic bullets and needed just one more for the shooting contest on his wedding day. His staggering desperation is overwhelming in the song "In the Morning" (from the score to *The Black Rider*), where without the aid of the magic bullets his marksmanship rapidly deteriorated, returning to its horrendous original state. His feeble explanation that "perhaps a wind has blown the barrel from it's mark," fails and he has nightmarish images of hunting where he can hear "the bird but could not hit him

in the dark." Even though he realizes he has "bought and sold [his] only love," he once again goes to the crossroads and makes a final deal with the devil for one last bullet for the shooting contest on his wedding day. Unfortunately, Wilhelm has wandered too far down the wrong path at the crossroads and is unable to turn back, and this final bullet took not the wooden dove, but his young bride as its target. As a result of this horror, Wilhelm is driven to insanity by his deception and addiction which cost him the life of his beloved bride.

A different face of evil is found in the condemnation of sinners by the holy and saved, where escape is promised in the virtue of Jesus rather than in the ostensibly more accessible seduction of the devil. Evangelists and preachers warn against the treachery of cavorting with temptation and evil and predict the end of the world with the wrath of judgement day, if even from the closest street corner. Themselves wanderers, evangelists and preachers travel around instilling fear into the souls of the sinners to make them seek redemption and resolution. The song "Earth Died Screaming" (*Bone Machine*) is like a chapter from Revelations with a street corner evangelist screaming through a distorted microphone exhorting the end of the world. The apocalypse is near, forewarns the evangelist who tells the unsaved souls that "Well hell doesn't want you / And heaven is full" and the world will come to chaos with "crows as big as airplanes / The lion has three heads / And someone will eat the skin that he sheds." He describes the day of wrath when "There was thunder / There was lightening / Then the stars went out / And the moon fell from the sky / It rained mackerel / It rained trout" and "the earth died screaming" while everyone was oblivious as they lay dreaming.

"Dirt in the Ground" (*Bone Machine*) offers the heightened awareness of a world-wearied purveyor of his own truths who believes that it does not matter whether he holds "a dream of love / Or a dream of lies" since everyone is "all gonna be in the same place / When we die." Morality is contemplated through his existentialist tract which offers the levelling

truth that it does not make a difference if you are "the sky / Or a bird / 'Cause hell is boiling over / And heaven is full" and everyone is equally chained to the world in which we live. The character preaches that even if redemption is sought or punishment is given, as the gallows groan the hangman will still intone the reminder that everyone is "gonna be / Just dirt in the ground" and there is no escaping that reality.

Contrasted to this harsh reality and the bitterness of Judgement Day where every façade is obliterated and everyone is judged equally, the song "Jesus Gonna Be Here" (*Bone Machine*) is a serendipitous sinner's lament that "Jesus will be here / Be here soon / He's gonna cover us up with leaves / With a blanket from the moon / With a promise and a vow / And a lullaby for my brow." This faithful practitioner worships a benevolent and sympathetic saviour in his own way as it is much easier for him to face every day and struggle through his transgressions with a liberal and mellow divinity deciding his fate, rather than an acrimonious almighty power. Since Jesus will be "rolling on down the lane" soon enough, the character is in no rush to line up or shout because he has no doubt that he is going to get himself "Unfurled from this mortal coiled up world." He comforts himself with the image of his immanent Jesus, who "Hollywood be thy name," will be coming over the horizon in "a brand new Ford." He evades the possibility of severe judgement and condemnation for what he considers to be just small sins and knows his Jesus will be sophisticated and forgiving enough to overlook everyone's personal indulgences, like his drinking, as he feels, "I've been faithful / I've been so good" and will leave "this place better / Than the way [he] found it."

When sorting through daily problems or dealing with major catastrophes, Tom Waits' characters turn to some form of religion or spirituality that they may tailor to suit their needs. Tom Waits repudiates organized religion and his characters often approach and utilize religion in a blasphemous manner. His characters are very human in their convictions and

are often easily caught in addictions, swayed by temptation, drawn in to the promise of salvation, or persuaded by evil while struggling through life or in their quest to escape from their hardships which carried them straight to the crossroads.

xii. SURRURALISM

Moving away from late night urban images and sounds, Tom Waits explores the rural in *Mule Variations*. His compositions here project rural blues elements, elements he himself describes as "surrural," combining what he considers to be a surreal aesthetic with rural sounds, themes, and images. In addition to the rustic field hollers like "Cold Water," and the knee-stomping "Filipino Box Spring Hog," *Mule Variations* contains affecting and highly emotional odes to family life and domesticity as found in "House Where Nobody Lives," "Picture in a Frame," "Take It With Me," and "Come On Up To The House." In contrast to the fragmentation and relentless movement of many of Waits' recent works, *Mule Variations* finds identity and home emerging with themes like persistence, thinking big thoughts, maintaining high ambitions, and preserving clear visions that are never compromised. *Mule Variations* may appear to be an erratic assemblage of conflicting ideas and emotions, but eventually, under Waits' grand design, everything finds its place.

Domesticity runs rampant in the song "House Where Nobody Lives" where an abandoned house becomes an eyesore for a neighbourhood as "the paint was all cracked / It was peeled off of the wood / Papers were stacked on the porch / where I stood / and the weeds had grown up / just as high as the door" and it "Looks like no one will ever come back." This empty house once "held laughter / Once it held dreams" and was once a home, but now it is "just made of wood" and stands "abandoned and cold," void of its former inhabitants who had reasons to look for their happiness elsewhere. The character in this song observes that no quantity of material objects or possessions can replace "someone to have,

someone to hold" and understands that "what makes a house grand / Ain't the roof or the doors / If there's love in a house / It's a palace for sure."

In contrast to the deserted house in "House Where Nobody Lives," "Filipino Box Spring Hog" takes an opposite look at domesticity. In "Filipino Box Spring Hog," the house is opened and its inhabitants welcome old friends and vagabonds for a vulgar improvised feast where a pig is doused in gasoline and roasted in a hollowed out mattress. Soon the house is full of rowdy people and strange foods like "Rattle snake piccata with grapes and figs." The host of the impromptu spree "danced with a soldier's glee / with a rum soaked crook / And a big fat laugh" as his festivities got under way and he gathered together his companions: "[he] saw Bill Bones, gave him a yell / Kehoe spiked the nog / With a chain link fence / And a scrap iron jaw / Cookin up a Filipino Box Spring hog / Spider rolled in from / Hollister Burn / With a one-eyed stolen Mare / Donned himself with chicken fat / Sawin on a jaw bone violin there." Tom Waits and his wife Kathleen Brennan make an appearance as characters at this riotous party as he "was naked to the waist / with my fierce black hound" and "Kathleen was sittin down / In little reds recovery room / In her criminal underwear bra." The convergence of strange characters and their communal "surrural" experience in "Filipino Box Spring Hog" is a far diversion from the lonely and desolate characters and stories that have previously permeated Tom Waits' works.

The ardent and heartfelt emotion of a drifter who feels he has "seen it all boys / [he's] been all over / Been everywhere in the / whole wide world", has reached the end of his road in the song "Pony" (*Mule Variations*). After a lifetime filled with exodus and turning away from his past, this wanderer contemplates if his "pony knows the way back home." He started his travels "full of wonder when [he] left Murfreesboro," but now, after years of being alone and living "on nothing but dreams and train smoke / Somehow [his] watch and chain / got lost" and he is left "full of hollow on Maxwell street." After his lifetime of adventures,

he is left with this disarming ode of longing for his home, which ends with a dream for domesticity in "Evelyn's Kitchen / with old Gyp curled around [his] feet." This vagabond possesses an urge to belong somewhere and dreams "of *belonging*; to be, for once, *of* the place, not merely *in*" (Bauman 1996, 30). This song is of particular interest in that it shows the character of the road wearied wanderer having "walked from Natchez to Hushpukena," exhausting his quest for adventure, and wanting to finally go home with a warm embrace for the life he had known once before.

The song "Come On Up To The House" which closes *Mule Variations*, is an open-armed call to all of the downtrodden vagabonds, desperate drunks, frightened runaways, exploited freaks, tormented deviants, rain dogs, and lost souls that Tom Waits has immortalized in song. His tattered characters first found in Tom Waits a sympathetic listener, who gave them not only comfort, but a voice, and now they finally find shelter in his home, with Tom Traubert sitting on the couch with the Eyeball Kid, listening to Frank play his accordion. Waits' roaring weathered voice offers a harsh love for all the martyring and self-pitying characters who are "singing lead soprano / In a junkman's choir" and find life "nasty, brutish and short," as he tells them, "All your crying don't do no good / Come on up to the house / Come down off the cross / We can use the wood," and still swings opens the door. Human resilience is expounded and personal "mountain of woe" tragedies are expected to be left at the mat at the front door as everyone is reminded that when "The only things that you can see / Is all that you lack," "You gotta come on up to the house" where a bed, a warm meal, and compassion will always be found. This somewhat distorted glimpse of domesticity may be partially reflective of the lifestyle Tom Waits has settled into, but it seems more likely that his characters have simply lead him to this inviting place in order to forget their troubles and tribulations. After wandering and seeking escape for what seems like an eternity, all of the drifters have overcome their fears and finally have found a home.

IV. BEAUTIFUL MALADIES: TOM WAITS' REALISM

Throughout his career, Waits played with the balance between crossing truth and authenticity with fabrication and illusion. However, despite the deliberate construction of his early hipster image, Tom Waits has always been unfalteringly true to his vision and his passion for irony, pathos, tragic beauty, and absurdity. While sometimes striking deeply resonant chords with profound views and detailed representations of reality in his lyrics and music, Tom Waits, as a performer, also finds himself producing his vision of reality on many different levels. Waits, like the realists, works towards a translucent form in his music; one in which the listener or audience would be shown and made aware of the underlying constituent components of human life by using everyday events and characters as his subject matter. In music, in order "to achieve that fusion of the particular and the general which is the essence of realistic art" (Lukács 1971, 45), involves an acknowledgement of universal experience and an assumption of a unity of the world from which individuals cannot be disentangled, as well as an awareness of the effect of the individual. Tom Waits' characters and themes ought to be examined in the broader context of the Realism aesthetic (in spite of his self declared allegiance to Surrealism), and the constitutive contradictions within Realism.

In his discussion of the negation of outward reality, Lukács shows that the "attenuation of reality and dissolution of personality are thus interdependent: the stronger the one, the stronger the other" and consequently, "man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experiential fragments; he is as inexplicable to others as to himself" (Lukács 1971, 26). Therefore, by recognizing that this opposition between man and his environment exists, Waits expounds further meaning and depth into his realistic representations by delving beyond external appearances into the abstract realms of personality, motivation, emotion, and dreams. In his works from *Swordfishtrombones* onwards, Tom Waits often uses dreams and

fantasy in order to heighten the meaning of the quotidian elements of his works. By choosing often misfit, outcast, or desperate characters as his subjects, Tom Waits demonstrates the contradictions within society and individuals whereby "the average man is simply a dimmer reflection of the contradictions always existing in man and society" and "eccentricity is a socially-conditioned distortion" (Lukács 1971, 31).

The fundamental contradiction within Realism arises, according to Jameson, from the very originality of the concept of Realism itself, which claims both "cognitive" as well as "aesthetic" status. He writes,

> A new value, contemporaneous with the secularization of the world under capitalism, the ideal of realism presupposes a form of aesthetic experience which yet lays claim to a binding relationship to the real itself, that is to say, to those realms of knowledge and praxis which had traditionally been differentiated from the realm of the aesthetic, with its disinterested judgements and its constitution as sheer appearance. But it is extremely difficult to do justice to both of these properties simultaneously. (Jameson 1988, 135)

Therefore, the position of realism finds itself almost immediately incompatible with aesthetic theories which attempt to encompass some sort of universality. The more detailed and realistic a work or style becomes, the less it is able to transform an intangible idea. At the other end of the contradiction within realism, the greater the emphasis on artistic conventions, effects, and techniques becomes, the more difficult it is to maintain the cognitive truths and reality of the work. For Waits, songs like "The Piano Has Been Drinking (Not Me)" and "Bad Liver and a Broken Heart" (*Small Change*) are exemplary of effective collisions between the cognitive and aesthetic values of realism. With music that is reflective of the staggering traipse of a drunk, Waits presents the image of the lugubrious drunken piano player sharing his stories with strangers. Such musical and character presentations and choices were also indicative of his own persona both on and off-stage at the time, as well as maintaining the fictitious nature of his performance and songs.

How does Tom Waits' music and instrumental pieces then function as realistic art and truly, how far can music be carried as a realistic form of art when its very medium abstracts? Unable to directly represent tangible objects, or understandable ideas, music does not seem to truly fit within the scope of realism, but seems to be once removed from it. Music, as a representative art, is the one which least reproduces things materially or quantitatively as the limit in imitating actual sounds is quickly reached. Such moments of lifelike imitation, like the ringing of a bell or the blast of a train whistle, do not easily blend into the fabric of musical construction, but rather obtrude from its intrinsic design, like a material object glued onto a painting, or an article of clothing placed on a sculpture. While Tom Waits occasionally makes use of musical effects and instrumental techniques that mimic sounds in reality, such as playing with rice in a bass drum to imitate the sound of waves crashing against a shore, his music is not laden with or focused upon developing such lifelike musical impressions.

Tom Waits also works in a similar style as found in Brecht's epic operas and theatre wherein there exists a separation and independence of the elements of words, music, and production, rather than one element gaining supremacy over the others. Brecht emphasized the narrative in his works and required that the music in his epic operas and theatre communicates, sets forth the text or alternately, takes the text for granted, takes up a position, and gives the desired attitude (Brecht 1964, 38). Tom Waits' music, from his early jazz-piano styles, to his blues-based grooves, to his abrasive percussive meanderings, has always been meaningful and communicative independently from the text. Following the epic theatrical sensibilities of Brecht and Weill, Waits' music functioned to depict moods, create ironic statements, and expand characters, narratives, or personas. Since Waits' music can be seen to have taken "up a purely emotional attitude and spurned none of the stock narcotic attractions," it "became an active collaborator in the stripping bare of the middleclass corpus

of ideas. It became, so to speak, a muck-raker, an informer, a nark" (Brecht 1964, 85-86). Tom Waits' music clarifies the intended emotional effects without distortion and elucidates the social, political, or moral meanings which underline his realistic observations.

True popular music is supposed to be indicative of the voice of the people, however the influence of capitalism with its concerns of record sales, cross marketing, and high commercial sales figures has changed the face of music consumption. However, Tom Waits has managed to pursue a thirty-year career defined by his personal aspirations with little concern for financial gain. He has been driven by his intense desire and compulsion to create, rather than by a directed interest in commercial success. Waits' music receives very little airplay, except for ambitious college radio stations, being too outside the musical demographics of stations that play his chronological contemporaries or modern rock. Tom Waits' music is primarily spread from friend to friend, musician to musician, teacher to student and so forth, rather than through aggressive advertising and marketing. The absence of commercial use of Tom Waits' music also lends to its authenticity and sincerity, qualities inherent to realism.

Realistic art, in part, involves observing and representing humanity and objects precisely and dispassionately. Authenticity and sincerity are essential concerns in realistic art whereby subject matter must not be heightened or debased, but must be seen and represented as it is. This sincere perspective is not accomplished through passivity, but is driven by an ebullient and genuine interest in the individuality and uniqueness of everything that is beheld. Tom Waits succeeds as a realist in his explicitly detailed and keen observations of misfit and lowlife characters, and in his ability to disassociate his personal emotions from his art while still creating authentically expressive and aesthetically appealing works. Tom Waits does not simply take flat musical snapshots of his characters or their situations. For example, even though Waits' vagabond characters are clearly recognizable as vagabonds, he draws attention

to subtle aspects and intricacies of each individual character, often in a beautiful wash of detailed language and textured musical layers. His songs are not merely emotionless depictions of human forms, societal organization, and peculiar objects, but are saturated with diverse associations and emotional explorations. However, while this would appear to move Tom Waits as an artist away from the spirit of realism to say, the realm of romanticism or impressionism, it can be argued that Waits is providing realistic statements of human nature and the accompanying moods and feeling that are found within it. Just as the "literature of realism, aiming at a truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings," so too does Waits aim to encompass both the subjective and objective realities of his characters, their emotions and personalities, and their environments in his lyrics (Lukács 1971, 23).

Music, like any of the arts, appeals to the imagination, but music also has the ability to present the transcendental essence of everything physical in the world. Music deals primarily with emotional sequences which language cannot necessarily decode or analyze even when broken down to its constituent parts. While it is true music can be composed purely cognitively, "an over-emphasis on its cognitive functions often leads to a naïve denial of the necessarily fictive character of artistic discourse" (Jameson 1977, 198). For this reason, in order for music to maintain value as art, it must contain elements of beauty and personality or reflect the existence of visceral beings either in the process of creation or appreciation. In order for music to be comfortably nestled in realism, a realism of emotions must be permitted to exist. Tom Waits' music speaks to the reality of a performer trying to communicate the particular narratives of his carefully selected and detailed characters. As Waits' musical style progressed throughout his career, his attention to realism also developed. His earlier years found all of his characters and their narratives seeped in jazz and Beat poet conventions and as a result, the music that depicts each character is not always

noticeably individualized. These earlier works can be considered somewhat anecdotal and are not fully constituted in the realism that his later works more thoroughly encompassed.

Gradually, Tom Waits took a more objective stance in his approach to his musical compositions and allowed his music to become much more representative of the needs of his characters and the development of his narratives, rather than satisfying the image and persona of a drunken jazzer and time-warped Beat-poet that he wanted to project. As Tom Waits allowed his persona to be a separate entity from his music, his characters not only received the careful attention and incisive observation that is integral to the realism in his lyrics, but they also became much more deeply embedded into the fabric and construction of his music. As well as working to integrate his lyrics and music, Tom Waits alternately sought their independence. Similar to Kurt Weill's musical style of using gorgeous melodies to accompany disturbing lyrics of death, murder, and rape, Waits also heightens the cynicism and irony of his lyrics by adding contrasting melodic musical accompaniments to songs like "Who Are You" from *Bone Machine* and "I'll Shoot the Moon" from *The Black Rider*. Kurt Weill arrests the presumptions that a certain kind of music is appropriate for conveying a particular sentiment and Waits too has experimented with these principles of providing foils musically in his songs.

Admitting that emotion necessarily exists for the realist artist can cause objections for fear of reinstating personal subjectivity which can distort the objective representation of the subject matter, something which realism seeks to avoid. Can artists represent universal truths or the real accurately if emotion enters into their work? Feelings are highly individualized and have the potential to interfere with the methods of realism, but they are necessary to motivate creation and subsequently, emotions can be cultivated to not obscure truth. No matter how disconnected or impersonal an artist may feel towards a subject, it is undeniable that what results is demonstrative of their views, feelings, or perspectives. Therefore,

according to realism, art must be impersonal. In order to reconcile emotion and universality, artists must not depict themselves in their work so that their art can be uplifted beyond personal affections and tendencies. Tom Waits is very aware of the distinctions between his emotional subjectivity and artistic objectivity, as well as understanding the necessity of transcending personal feelings in order to produce effective and far-reaching art. For years, Waits has carefully protected and guarded his own humanity and emotionalism, creating a persona which disguised it, and evaded the media's relentless attempts to uncover it. While deflecting attention away from himself, Tom Waits thoroughly investigates and probes one misfit wanderer or lonely traveller after another, trying to discover their fascinating truths.

Works of art must reveal or present something individual or new to what, in their realistic representation, appears to be common experience in order for it to have interest for others as a work of art and not simply be a lifelike impression. Musically and lyrically, Tom Waits does not merely depict objective visual images that are stark and devoid of emotion. His music is brimming with the extremes of emotion and feeling, but they are carefully selected and expounded. He truthfully depicts the emotional struggles, conflicts, and dreams of his characters without letting his personal feelings or judgements override those of his characters. Extending beyond the reach of musical photography, Tom Waits focuses attention on what is significant and what signifies. By doing so, the audience experiences a stronger, more intense, more communicative, more compelling, more disturbing, or more profound impression of the real than the real itself is capable of producing.

Tom Waits rejects imaginative idealization, as does the cognitive side of realism, in favour of an effective portrayal of the ignored and forgotten aspects of life and dreams. He guides the listener through the underbelly of society, through the deepest despair of the human condition, through the crazed nightmares and psychotic episodes of his delusional characters, and remakes these situations with a greater vividness in order that the listener may

comprehend more clearly the distinctness and individuality of his characters and their narratives. In addition to portraying the lives, appearances, and problems of ordinary individuals, Waits also presents a realistic depiction of idealist and romantic characters such as Frank O'Brien (*Frank's Wild Years*). This treatment of his characters allows Tom Waits to explore all aspects of human expression and deploy romantic ideas while still conforming to the expectations of realism. In the nightmarish images imbued in his albums like *Bone Machine* and *The Black Rider*, it is found that "the most improbable, fantastic statements appear real through force of descriptive detail" and therefore it can be disputed that "realistic detail is a precondition for the communication of a sense of absurdity" (Lukács 1971, 48). As a result, while Waits may be drawn to surreal dream sequences and hallucinations in his later works, it is his attention to descriptive detail that keeps him tied to a realistic aesthetic.

Although Tom Waits' art is representative of life, it is still separate and distinct from his personal life and reality. Arguably, Waits does distend the confines of realism in his performances where there exists a convergence of multiple realities, none of which include a true portrayal of the "real" Tom Waits. In performance, these multiple worlds collide: there is the reality of his characters and their narratives, the reality of Waits as a performer morphing from character to character, the reality of Waits as an insightful comedian and storyteller in his between songs banter, the reality of Tom Waits as a vaudevillian troubadour, and the reality of Tom Waits as a musician pounding on piano keys, tugging at guitar strings, or wildly stamping his feet. It can be seen that,

> How we read lyrics is not a completely random or idiosyncratic choice. The lyricist sets up the situation – through [his] use of language, [his] construction of character – in a way that, in part, determines the response we make, the nature of our engagement. But once we say that, we admit that there's another 'voice' here, the voice of the lyricist, the author, the person putting the words in the 'I's' mouth, putting the protagonists into their lyrical situation. And the authorial voice can be more or less distinctive; we may recognize – respond to – that voice (Cole Porter, Elvis Costello, Morrissey, P.J. Harvey) even when reading a lyric. 'Voice' in this sense describes a sense of personality that doesn't involve shifters at all, but is

> familiar as the special way a person has with words: we immediately know who's speaking. (Frith 1996, 184)

Jameson articulates that in "the Brechtian aesthetic, indeed, the idea of realism is not a purely artistic and formal category, but rather governs the relationship of the work of art to reality itself, characterizing a particular stance towards it" (Jameson 1988, 141). Therefore, both Brecht's and Waits' respective works of art are layered in realism so that "'realistic' and experimental attitudes are tried out, not only between its characters and their fictive realities, but also between the audience and the work itself, and – not least significant – between the writer and his own materials and techniques" (Jameson 1988, 141). Like Brecht, whose "practice of 'realism' clearly explode[s] the purely representational categories of the traditional mimetic work," Tom Waits has pushed the scope of realism, in that he exists in between the realities of his self and art.

Working in the realist vein, Tom Waits directs the vision of his audiences to the distinctness and contours of his subjects that are often undiscovered in reality. Tom Waits has the ability to find beauty and magic in the things that seem to be the least beautiful or magical. Tom Waits explores the colour, movement, and sounds of the unexceptional, giving them aesthetic worth through his musical representations. Ordinary characters are dissected and given a new vitality as they are stripped of their habitual associations. Instruments, sounds, materials, and his voice are stripped of their practical functions and are manipulated and utilized in many different ways in order to depict the fluctuations of his subjects. Since realism involves the unembellished depiction of life, society, and nature, it is connected to living existence and the truths and revelations that occur therein. This closeness to concrete reality and the artist's passion to express truth allows aesthetic values to penetrate and be viable in realistic art. This also allows for artists, such as Waits, to explore the psychological depths, inner motivations, and will of their subject matter without rejecting the methods of

realism. For Tom Waits, feeling, imagination, and psychological depth are essential to his expression of truth.

Realism is not bound to reporting a story, literal imitation, or retelling the obvious, but works instead to enhance the common and unexceptional through careful treatment by the artist. Tom Waits' vast repertoire repeatedly refers back to a physical, existent reality whether he ventures through dark street corners in New York, the maniacal hallucinations of a drunk, the desperation of a diner waitress, or the temptation found at the crossroads. There is an undeniable grit to his music that leaves listeners with dirt under their fingernails or a tear in their eye and a greater understanding of existence, emotional journeys, and common experience.

One tendency of realism is to confront ugliness, pain, and darkness as well as clarify traditional notions of beauty. Natural beauty is intensified and augmented in Tom Waits' realistic expression of truth, and ugliness is exposed and examined so as to discover its richness, express something new, and produce an alternately beautiful result. Tom Waits' strongly defined characters, jagged musical accompaniment, and gnarly vocals defy formal standards of beauty, but find a place in realism where the conception of beauty has been widened so that it is shaped and formed by truth, sincerity, and expression. Essentially, what is aesthetically pleasing in art is that which has character. Character is the representation of truth in all its intensity, whether attractive, disturbing, or ugly, and it is this search for truth in all subjects equally that provokes Tom Waits to investigate a deeper and more profound realism. This expanded perception of truth extends to two levels of reality, physical and psychological. The external truth helps to translate the inner truths of a person or object, whereby facial expressions, gestures, words, colours, scenery, sounds, all have the potential to express the ideas and feelings that are internalized. Realism lies essentially in the treatment of the subject matter and accordingly, the realistic artist has a responsibility to

transmute the truth and individuality of the subject into something meaningful and vivid in reality.

Much of Tom Waits' songwriting material has emerged from the detritus of post-industrial, corporatized American culture and the narratives that flourished therein. He himself admitted, "I think something is gonna come out of this garbage world we're living in, where knowledge and information are becoming so abstract and the things that used to really work are sitting out there like big dinosaur carcasses, rusting. Something's gonna have to be made out of it that has value" (Richardson 1999).

DISCOGRAPHY

Closing Time (1973)

Asylum CD 60836

Ol' '55; I Hope That I Don't Fall In Love With You; Virginia Avenue; Old Shoes (& Picture Postcards; Midnight Lullaby; Martha; Rosie; Lonely; Ice Cream Man; Little Trip To Heaven (On The Wings Of Your Love); Grapefruit Moon; Closing Time.

The Heart of Saturday Night (1974)

Asylum CD 1015-2

New Coat Of Paint; San Diego Serenade; Semi Suite; Shiver Me Timbers; Diamonds On My Windshield; (Looking for) The Heart Of Saturday Night; Fumblin' With The Blues; Please Call Me Baby; Drunk On The Moon; The Ghosts Of Saturday Night (After Hours At Napoleone's Pizza House).

Nighthawks at the Diner (1975)

Asylum (Elektra) CDA 2008

(intro); Emotional Weather Report; (intro); On A Foggy Night; (intro); Eggs And Sausage (In A Cadillac With Susan Michelson); (intro); Better Off Without A Wife; Nighthawk Postcards (From Easy Street); (intro); Warm Beer And Cold Women; (intro); Putnam County; Spare Parts I (A Nocturnal Emission); Nobody; (intro); Big Joe And Phantom 309; Spare Parts II and Closing.

Small Change (1976)

Asylum CD 1078

Tom Traubert's Blues (Four Sheets To The Wind In Copenhagen); Step Right Up; Jitterbug Boy (Sharing A Curbstone With Chuck E. Weiss, Robert Marchese, Paul Body, and The Mug and Artie); I Wish I Was In New Orleans (In The Ninth Ward); The Piano Has Been Drinking (Not Me) (An Evening With Pete King); Invitation To The Blues; Pasties And A G-String (At The Two O'Clock Club); Bad Liver And A Broken Heart (In Lowell); The One That Got Away; Small Change (Got Rained On With His Own .38); I Can't Wait To Get Off Work (And See My Baby On Montgomery Avenue).

Foreign Affairs (1977)

Asylum CD 1117

Cinny's Waltz; Muriel; I Never Talk To Strangers; Medley: Jack & Neal / California Here I Come; A Sight For Sore Eyes; Potter's Field; Burma-Shave; Barber Shop; Foreign Affair.

Blue Valentine (1978)

Asylum CD 162

Somewhere (from "West Side Story"); Red Shoes By The Drugstore; Christmas Card From A Hooker In Minneapolis; Romeo Is Bleeding; $29.00; Wrong Side Of The Road; Whistlin Past The Graveyard; Kentucky Avenue; A Sweet Little Bullet From A Pretty Blue Gun; Blue Valentines.

Heartattack and Vine (1980)

Asylum CD 60547

Heartattack And Vine; In Shades; Saving All My Love For You; Downtown; Jersey Girl; 'Til The Money Runs Out; On The Nickel; Mr. Siegal; Ruby's Arms.

Bounced Checks (compilation) (1981)

German Asylum K52316

Heartattack And Vine; Jersey Girl (alternate master); Eggs And Sausage; I Never Talk To Strangers; The Piano Has Been Drinking (live in Dublin, Ireland, March 1981); Whistling Past The Graveyard (alternate master); Mr. Henry (previously unreleased); Diamonds On My Windshield; Burma Shave; Tom Traubert's Blues.

One From The Heart (1982)

CBS Records CK 37703

Opening Montage: Tom's Piano Intro, Once Upon A Town; Is There Any Way Out Of This Dream?; Picking Up After You; Old Boyfriends; Broken Bicycles; I Beg Your Pardon; Little Boy Blue; Instrumental Montage: The Tango, Circus Girl; You Can't Unring A Bell; This One's From The Heart; Take Me Home; Presents.

Swordfishtrombones (1983)

Island CIDM 90095

Underground; Shore Leave; Dave The Butcher (instrumental); Johnsburg, Illinois; 16 Shells From A Thirty-Ought Six; Town With No Cheer; In The Neighborhood; Just Another Sucker On The Vine (instrumental); Frank's Wild Years; Swordfishtrombone; Down, Down, Down; Soldier's Things; Gin Soaked Boy; Trouble's Braids; Rainbirds (instrumental).

Anthology of Tom Waits (compilation) (1984)

Asylum (Elektra) 7559-60416-2 (LP or Cassette only)

Ol' 55; Diamonds On My Windshield; (Looking for) The Heart Of Saturday Night; I Hope I Don't Fall In Love With You; Martha; Tom Traubert's Blues; The Piano Has Been Drinking (Not Me); I Never Talk To Strangers; Somewhere (from "West Side Story"); Burma Shave; Jersey Girl; San Diego Serenade; A Sight For Sore Eyes.

The Asylum Years (compilation) (1984) (1986)

Asylum 7559-60321-1 (LP or Cassette only) 7559-60494-2 (CD only)

Diamonds On My Windshield; (Looking For) The Heart Of Saturday Night; Martha; The Ghosts Of Saturday Night (After Hours At Napoleone's Pizza House); Grapefruit Moon; Small Change (Got Rained On With His Own .38); Burma Shave; I Never Talk To Strangers; Tom Traubert's Blues; Blue Valentines; Potter's Field; Kentucky Avenue; Somewhere (from "West Side Story"); Ruby's Arms.

Raindogs (1985)

Island CIDM 131

Singapore; Clap Hands; Cemetary Polka; Jockey Full Of Bourbon; Tango Till They're Sore; Big Black Mariah; Diamonds & Gold; Hang Down Your Head; Time; Rain Dogs; Midtown (instrumental); 9th & Hennepin; Gun Street Girl; Union Square; Blind Love; Walking Spanish; Downtown Train; Bride Of Rain Dog (instrumental); Anywhere I Lay My Head.

Franks Wild Years (1987)

Island CIDM 1129

Hang On St. Chrisptopher; Straight To The Top (rhumba); Blow Wind Blow; Temptation; Innocent When You Dream (Barroom); I'll Be Gone; Yesterday Is Here; Please Wake Me Up; Franks Theme; More Than Rain; Way Down In The Hole; Straight

To The Top (Vegas); I'll Take New York; Telephone Call From Istanbul; Cold Cold Ground; Train Song; Innocent When You Dream (78).

Big Time (live compilation) (1988)
Island CIDM 1203
16 Shells From A Thirty-Ought-Six; Red Shoes; Underground; Cold Cold Ground; Straight To The Top; Yesterday Is Here; Way Down In The Hole; Falling Down; Strange Weather; Big Black Mariah; Rain Dogs; Train Song; Johnsburg, Illinois; Ruby's Arms; Telephone Call From Istanbul; Clap Hands; Gun Street Girl; Time.

The Early Years(1991) (recorded July-December 1971)
Bizarre/Straight R2 70557
Goin' Down Slow; Poncho's Lament; I'm Your Late Night Evening Prostitute; Had Me A Girl; Ice Cream Man; Rockin' Chair; Virginia Ave.; Midnight Lullaby; When You Ain't Got Nobody; Little Trip To Heaven; Frank's Song; Look's Like I'm Up Shit Creek Again; So Long I'll See Ya.

Bone Machine (1992)
Island 314-512-580-2
Earth Died Screaming; Dirt In The Ground; Such A Scream; All Stripped Down; Who Are You; The Ocean Doesn't Want Me; Jesus Gonna Be Here; A Little Rain; In The Colosseum; Goin' Out West; Murder In The Red Barn; Black Wings; Whistle Down The Wind; I Don't Wanna Grow Up; Let Me Get Up On It; That Feel.

Night on Earth (1992)
Island 510 725-2
Back In The Good Old World (gypsy); Los Angeles Mood (chromium descensions); Los Angeles Theme (another private dick); New York Theme (hey, you can have that heartattack outside buddy); Mew York Mood (a new haircut and a busted lip); Baby I'm Not a Baby Anymore (Beatrice theme); Good Old World (waltz); Carnival (Brunello Del Montalcino); On The Other Side Of The World; Good Old World (gypsy instrumental); Paris Mood (un de fromage); Dragging A Dead Priest; Helsinki Mood; Carnival Bob's Confession; Good Old World (waltz); On The Other Side Of The World (instrumental).

The Black Rider (1993)
Island 314-518-559-2
Lucky Day Overture; The Black Rider; November; Just The Right Bullets; Black Box Theme; T'Ain't No Sin; Flash Pan Hunter (Intro); That's The Way; The Briar And The Rose; Russian Dance; Gospel Train (orchestra); I'll Shoot The Moon; Flash Pan Hunter; Crossroads; Gospel Train; Interlude; Oily Night; Lucky Day; The Last Rose Of Summer; Carnival.

The Early Years V2 (1993)
Bizarre/Straight PT3 40602
Hope I Don't Fall In Love With You; Ol' 55; Mockin' Bird; In Between Love; Blue Skies; Nobody; I Want You; Shiver Me Timbers; Grapefruit Moon; Diamonds On My Windshield; Please Call Me Baby; So It Goes; Old Shoes.

Beautiful Maladies (compilation) (1998)

Island 314 524 519-2

Hang On St. Christopher; Temptation; Clap Hands; The Black Rider; Underground; Jockey Full Of Bourbon; Earth Died Screaming; Innocent When You Dream; Straight To The Top; Frank's Wild Year's; Singapore; Shore Leave; Johnsburg, Illinois; Way Down In The Hole; Strange Weather (live); Cold Cold Ground (live); November; Downtown Train; 16 Shells From A Thirty-Ought Six; Jesus Gonna Be Here; Good Old World (waltz); I Don't Wanna Grow Up; Time.

Mule Variations (1999)

Anti/Epitaph 86547-2

Big In Japan; Lowside Of The Road; Hold On; Get Behind The Mule; House Where Nobody Lives; Cold Water; Pony; What's He Building?; Black Market Baby; Eyeball Kid; Picture In A Frame; Chocolate Jesus; Georgia Lee; Filipino Box Spring Hog; Take It With Me; Come On Up To The House.

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APPENDIX I

INTERNET RESOURCES

Tom Waits Digest
http://www.officialtomwaits.com

Tom Waits Miscellania
http://www.front.net/gtausch/waits.html

Tom Waits: MP3
http://www.tom-waits.spb.ru/english/mp3.html

Tom Waits Supplement
http://users.castel.nl/hartp01.htm

The Dallas Morning News
sv Tom Waits
http://www.dallasnews.com/year2000/over2-1120.htm

Salon.com
sv Tom Waits
http://www.salon.com/ent/music/feature/1999/04/27/waits/index.html

Johnengler.com
http://www.johnengler.com/19/31/Reviews/musWaits.html

Boston Phoenix
sv Tom Waits
http://www.bostonphoenix.com/archive/music/99/04/29/TOM_WAITS.html

Drawer B New Media Reviews: Records, CDs, MP3s, Movies, Websites, Concerts.
sv Tom Waits
http://www.drawerb.com/99/05/tomwaits.htm

CANOE – Canadian news, sports, entertainment, finance and business news – Canadian Online Explorer
sv Tom Waits
http://cgi.canoe.ca./JamAlbumsW/waits_tom.html

The Synthesis
sv Tom Waits
http://thesynthesis.com/reviews/cd/waits.html

Kudzu New Media
sv Tom Waits
http://kudzunet.com/entoday/4-23/disc-domain/htm

Jared's Pick – Album Reviews
sv Tom Waits
http://www.angelfire.com/nh/jaredspick/tomwaits.html

Entertainment Weekly Online
sv Tom Waits
http://www.pathfinder.com/ew/review/music/0,1683,597,mulevariations.html

Dig Magazine: Music
sv Tom Waits
http://www.digmagazine.com/inside/music/waitsmule.cfm

CMJ Online: New Music First
sv Tom Waits
http://www.cmjmusic.com/Reviews/review.phtml?artistName=TOM+WAITS

Dallas Observer Online
sv Tom Waits
http://www.dallasobserver.com/1998/050699music1.html

The Village Voice
sv Tom Waits
http://www.villagevoice.com/arts/9919/sante.html

Website of the San Francisco Bay Guardian
sv Tom Waits
http://www.sfbg.com/AandE/33/34/lead.html

BUGjuice.com
sv Tom Waits
http://www.bugjuice.com/buzz/sonicnet/513571.html

CDNOW
sv Tom Waits
http://www.cdnow.com/cgi-bin/mserver/SID=577310451

Q – The World's Greatest Music Magazine Online
sv Tom Waits
http://www.qonline.co.uk/reviews/server.asp?id=17810&ss=tom+waits

KSGR 107.1 – Radio Austin
sv Tom Waits
http://www.kgsr.com

Time Out New York
sv Tom Waits
http://www.timeoutny.com/timeoutny2/to/hotseat/187waits.html

NY Rock (New York Rock)
sv Tom Waits
http://www.nyrock.com/interviews/waits_int.htm

Exclaim!
sv Tom Waits
http://www.exclaim.ca/features/9905/tomwaits.html

Addicted to Noise
sv Tom Waits
http://www.addict.com/issues/5.05/lofi/Cover_Story/Waits,_Tom

New York Daily News Online
sv Tom Waits
http://www.nydailynews.com/1999-04-18/New_York_Now/Music/a-25999.asp

Underground Sounds
sv Tom Waits
http://www.undergroundsounds.net/artists/waits/index.html

Wall of Sound Tom Waits Page
http://www.wallofsound.go.com/artists/tomwaits/home.html

Tom Waits Main Page
http://www.tomwaits.com/about.html

Rough Guides
sv Tom Waits
http://www-2.roughguides.com/rock/entries/entires-w/WAITS_TOM.html

Rolling Stone Online
http://rollingstone.tunes.com/sections/artists/text

La Plume Noire Magazine
sv Tom Waits
http://plume-noire.com/music/live/tom.html

NME.COM
sv Tom Waits
http://nme.com/reviews/reviews/19990320141832reviews.html

Tom Waits
http://www.levity.com/corduroy/waits.htm

Mr Showbiz Celebrities: Tom Waits Profile
http://mrshowbiz.go.com/people/tomwaits

Tom Waits
http://www.prollos.com/tomwaits/press.html

Los Angeles Times
sv Tom Waits
http://www.latimes.com

LA Weekly
sv Tom Waits
http://www.laweekly.com/ink/99/22/music.html

Newsweek.com
sv Tom Waits
http://newsweek.com/nw-srv/tnw/today/as/ex/ks0119_1.htm

San Francisco Chronicle
sv Tom Waits
http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive

Sonic Net Artist Info
Sv Tom Waits
http://www.sonicnet.com/artists

Tom Waits Interview
http://mebers.aol.com/Bluezville/Interview.HTMl

Usenet
http://alt.music.tom-waits

APPENDIX II

TRIBUTE ALBUMS

New Coat of Paint : Songs of Tom Waits
Step Right Up: The Songs of Tom Waits
Holly Cole - Temptation
Bad Liver and Hans Brustna Hjartan (Sweden) - Fjorton Sanger: Tom Waits
Pride of the Cross - Tommy's Blue Valentine

COVERS

2227	"Innocent When You Dream"
Dave Alvin	"Ol' 55"
Eric Anderson	"Ol' 55"
Archers of Loaf	"Big Joe and Phantom 309"
Beat Farmers	"Rosie"
Beekeeper	"Temptation"
Bim Skala Bim	"Train Song"
The Bobs	"Temptation"
Tim Buckley	"Martha"
Bulletboys	"Hang on St. Christopher"
T-Bone Burnett	"Time"
John Campbell	"Way Down in the Hole"
Mary Chapin Carpenter	"Downtown Train"
Alex Chilton	"Downtown"
Popa Chubby	"Heartattack and Vine"
Holly Cole	"Purple Avenue," "Take Me Home;" "Train Song;" "Jersey Girl;" "Temptation;" "Falling Down;" "Invitation to the Blues;" "Cinny's Waltz;" "Frank's Theme;" "Little Boy Blue;" "I Don't Wanna Grow Up;" "Tango Till They're Sore;" "(Looking for) The Heart of Saturday Night;" "Soldier's Things;" "I Want You;" "Good Old World;" "The Briar and the Rose"
Shawn Colvin	"The Heart of Saturday Night", "Ol' 55"
Compulsive Gamblers	"Way Down in the Hole"
Elvis Costello & the Brodsky Quartet	"More Than Rain"
Dion	"Heart of Saturday Night," "San Diego Serenade"
Dion DiMucci	"San Diego Serenade"
Drugstore	"Old Shoes"
Eagles	"Ol' 55"
English Country Blues Band	"Tom Traubert's Blues"
Everything But the Girl	"Downtown Train"
Marianne Faithfull	"Strange Weather"
Frente!	"Ruby's Arms"
Georgette Fry	"On the Nickel"
Davis Gaines	"Rainbow Sleeves"
Grievous Angels	"Cold, Cold Ground"
Nanci Griffith	"San Diego Serenade"
Screamin' Jay Hawkins	"Heartattack and Vine," "Ice Cream Man," "Whistling Past the Graveyard" .

Heavy Metal Horns	"Way Down in the Hole"
Holmes Brothers	"Train Song"
Hootie and the Blowfish	"Hope I Don't Fall In Love With You"
Hue & Cry	"Looking for the Heart of Saturday Night"
Human Drama	"Yesterday is Here," "Hang Down Your Head"
Brian Kennedy	"I Hope I Don't Fall in Love with You"
Rickie Lee Jones	"Rainbow Sleeves" (Waits never recorded this song)
Ute Lemper	"Purple Avenue," "The Part You Throw Away"
Magnapop	"Christmas Card From a Hooker in Minneapolis"
Manhattan Transfer	"Foreign Affair"
Claire Martin	"Old Boyfriends"
Ian Matthews	"Ol' 55"
Sarah McLachlan	"Ol' 55"
Meatloaf	"Martha"
Natalie Merchant	"I Hope I Don't Fall In Love With You"
Bette Midler	"Shiver Me Timbers"
Moxy Fruvous	"Jockey Full of Bourbon"
Maura O'Connell	"Broken Bicycles"
Pale Saints	"Jersey Girl"
Jeffrey Lee Pierce	"Pasties and a G-String"
The Picketts	"Looking For the Heart of Saturday Night"
Primus	"Cemetary Polka"
The Ramones	"I Don't Want to Grow Up"
Tony Rice and Dave Grismond	"Whistling Down the Wind"
Jonathan Richman	"The Heart of Saturday Night"
Brian Rickman	"I Wish I Was in New Orleans"
Mathilde Santing	"Soldier's Things," "Broken Bicycles"
Bob Seger	"Blind Love," "16 Shells From a Thirty-Ought Six," "New Coat of Paint"
Astrid Seriese (Dutch)	"Dirt in the Ground," "Underground," "Blow Wind Blow," "Yesterday is Here," "Little Boy Blue"
Pete Shelley	"Better Off Without a Wife"
Jane Siberry	"Train Song"
Patti Smythe	"Downtown Train"
Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes	"New Coat of Paint"
Bruce Springsteen	"Jersey Girl"
Rod Stewart	"Downtown Train," "Hang On St. Christopher," "Tom Traubert's Blues"
Jack Tempchin	"Tijuana" (Co-written with Waits)
These Immortal Souls	"You Can't Unring a Bell"
Tindersticks	"Mockin' Bird"
Trike	"Pasties and a G-String"
Johan Verminnen	"Better Off Without a Wife"
Violent Femmes	"Step Right Up"
The Walkabouts	"Yesterday's Here"
Jerry Jeff Walker	"The Heart of Saturday Night"
The Wedding Present	"Red Shoes by the Drugstore"
Paul Young	"Soldier's Things"

APPENDIX III

FILM (Acting)

Paradise Alley (1978) Directed by Sylvester Stallone
Poetry in Motion (1982) Directed by Ron Mann
The Outsiders (1983) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
Rumblefish (1983) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
The Stone Boy (1983) Directed by Chris Cain
Cotton Club (1984) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
Down By Law (1986) Directed by Jim Jarmusch
Ironweed (1987) Directed by Hector Babenco
Candy Mountain (1988) Directed by Robert Frank
Cold Feet (1989) Directed by Robert Dornhelm
Mystery Train (1989) Directed by Jim Jarmusch
The Two Jakes (1990) Directed by Jack Nicholson
Queen's Logic (1990) Directed by Steve Rash
The Bearskin: An Urban Fairytale (1990) Directed by Ann Guedes
At Play in the Fields of the Lord (1991) Directed by Hector Babenco
The Fisher King (1991) Directed by Terry Gilliam
Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
Short Cuts (1993) Directed by Robert Altman
Coffee and Cigarettes (1993) Directed by Jim Jarmusch
Guy Maddin: Waiting for Twilight (1997) Directed by Noam Gonick
Mystery Men (1999) Directed by Kinka Usher
In The Boom Boom Room (2000) Directed by Barbara Kopple

FILM (Composition)

One From the Heart (1980)
Night On Earth (1992)
Bunny (1998)

SOUNDTRACKS

A Wedding (1978)
Paradise Alley (1978)
Bad Timing (1980)
On the Nickel (1980)
Wolfen (1981)
Prenom Carmen (1983)
Street Wise (documentary) (1985)
Yötyö (Night Job) (1985) (Finnish)
Lost In The Stars (1985)
Down By Law (1987)
Big Time (1988)
Sea of Love (1989)
American Heart (1992)
Leolo (1992)
Dead Man Walking(1995)
Georgia (1995)

Little Criminals (1995)
Smoke (1995)
Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead (1995)
Twelve Monkeys (1995)
Basquiat (1996)
Generation X (1996) (Fox TV Movie)
End Of Violence (1997)
Fishing With John (1998)
Condo Painting (1998)
Fight Club (1999)
Liberty Heights (2000)

THEATRE (Composition)

Frank's Wild Years (Steppenwolf, Chicago 1986)
The Black Rider (March 31, 1990, Hamburg, Germany)
Alice (Dec 26, 1992, Hamburg, Germany)

THEATRE (Performance)

Frank's Wild Years (Steppenwolf, Chicago 1986)
Demon Wine (early 1989, LA)

GUEST APPEARANCES

Gavin Bryars	Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet
Teddy Edwards	Mississippi Lad
Ramblin' Jack Elliot	Friends of Mine
Bart Hopkin	Orbitones: Spoon Harps & Bellowphones
Ute Lemper	Punishing Kiss
John Lurie	Fishing With John
Roy Orbison and Friends	A Black and White Night
Primus	Antipop
	Sailing on the Seas of Cheese
Bonnie Raitt	Homeplate
Rolling Stones	Dirty Work
Various Artists	Just Say Mao: Volume III of Just Say Yes
Chuck E. Weiss	Extremely Cool

MUSIC VIDEOS

Hold On (1999)
Blow Wind Blow (1995)
Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet (1993)
I Don't Want to Grow Up (1993)
Goin' Out West (1993)
It's All Right With Me (1990)
Blow Wind Blow (1987)
Temptation (1987)
In the Neighborhood (1983)
Downtown Train (1985)